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ABSTRACT

In June 1995, the Scottish Council for Research in Education began a 5-month study of the Standard Entrance Examination (SET) to the police in Scotland. The first phase was an analysis of existing recruitment and selection statistics from the eight Scottish police forces. Phase Two was a study of two police forces using a case study methodology. Identified issues were then circulated using the Delphi approach to all eight forces. There was a consensus that both society and the police are changing, and that disparate functional maps of a police officer's job have been developed. It was generally recognized that recruitment and selection are important, but time-consuming, aspects of police activity. Wide variations were found in practices across the eight forces, including the use of differential pass marks for the SET. Independent assessors have identified anomalies in the test indicating that it is both ambiguous and outdated in part, with differences in the readability of different versions that compromises comparability. Proportionately more women and ethnic minority candidates experience difficulty with the SET, and proportionately more white male candidates are eliminated following background inquiry or for "other reasons" than other groups. Both the insufficient number of applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds and their disproportionately higher failure rate on the SET need to be addressed. Recommendations for improving the construction and use of the SET are offered. Seventeen appendixes present supplemental information about the SET and the study. (Contains five figures and nine tables.) (SLD)

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Examining the Test

An Evaluation of the Police Standard Entrance Test

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The Scottish Office Central Research Unit
1996

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We hope that we have fairly represented the views of all who participated in the evaluation process.

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Examining the Test:

An Evaluation of the Police Standard Entrance Test

Summary

Introduction

In June 1995 the Scottish Council for Research in Education began a five month study of the Standard Entrance Examination to the police in Scotland. The project was funded by The Scottish Office.

The research comprised two phases:

Phase 1: an analysis of extant recruitment and selection statistics from the eight police forces.

Phase 2: a study of two police forces utilising a case study methodology. Additionally, emerging issues were circulated, Delphi-style, to all eight forces in order to validate the findings.

The research had two principal outcomes:

- an interim report, summarising statistical findings, presented in September;
- a final report, detailing our findings in respect of both phases.

Conclusions

The main findings and conclusions to emerge from the evaluation are as follows:

Context:

- **agreement that both society and policing are changing**
- **disparate functional maps of a police officer's job have been developed**
- **general agreement that policing is demanding**
- **recognition of the relationship between job competences and context, *viz.* situational understanding**

Recruitment and selection:

- **recruitment and selection is an important but time consuming activity for the police**
- **there is a wide variation in practices across the eight police forces including, for example, the use of differential pass marks in the SET**

- **each force has developed a slightly different recruitment pathway which affects the role and function of the SET**
- **there appears to be a desire to improve the SET as part of the selection process**

The SET:

- **independent assessors have identified anomalies in the test indicating that it is both ambiguous and outdated in part**
- **a readability test has highlighted significant differences in the three versions of the SET which compromise comparability**
- **the level of readability difficulty in version 2 of the SET equates to university degree level compared with the secondary education level required in versions 1 and 3**
- **the higher the educational level of candidates, the more likely they are to pass the test**
- **a revision of the SET is overdue as it does not conform to the expectations of modern society and a more professional service**
- **the SET should be perceived within the context of a recruitment pathway (discussed in full in Section 11)**

Candidates:

- **candidates experience difficulties particularly with Sections 2 and 3 of the SET**
- **female and male candidates have different prior educational attainment levels and achieve slightly different scores on the SET**
- **male candidates perform better than females candidates on Sections 2 and 3 of the SET**
- **candidates with a higher level of educational qualifications have a slightly increased chance of being appointed**

Minority groups and equal opportunities:

- **forces have identified the need to recruit currently under-represented groups**
- **proportionately more women and ethnic minority candidates experience difficulties with the SET**
- **proportionately more white male candidates are eliminated following 'background enquiry' and for 'other reasons' than other groups**
- **the police may not be viewed as an attractive career option by members of ethnic minority groups**

- **the police has a poor image with ethnic minority groups, largely for reasons outwith the influence of the police; although, according to a community relations official, this is reinforced by both the media and also some police officers' conduct**

- **there is no evidence to suggest that 'home visits' are used to eliminate members of ethnic minorities from the recruitment process**

- **both the insufficient number of applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds and their disproportionately higher failure rate on the SET need to be addressed**

Recommendations

On the basis of our findings, we would make the following recommendations:

Testing:

- **the SET should be revised to ensure that it measures abilities and knowledge relevant to police work**

- **a criterion referenced test should be developed**

- **the SET should be revised in ways that reflect changes in both the way recruits have been educated and the requirements of the job while bearing in mind the need to ensure that different groups of people have similar opportunities of passing the test**

Recruitment & selection:

- **the SET should be placed in the context of an agreed recruitment pathway**

- **the position of the SET in the recruitment pathway should be re-examined**

- **the police service should develop a standardised recruitment process based upon agreed principles and good practices but also consistent with both the disparate size of forces and the number of applicants**

- **the police service should define the role of the test and consider whether reduction of the number of candidates is a valid function of the SET**

- **forces should encourage informed self-selection by candidates and seek evidence of commitment to a career in the police force as a first stage in the recruitment pathway**

- **an exemplar of assessment centre-type activities in the form of a recruitment manual should be developed by, for example, an ACPOS Training Committee**

- **multiple pathways into the police should be considered, e.g. accreditation of prior learning, previous educational qualifications and relevant experience**

- **ways of recruiting under-represented groups, *viz.* women and members of ethnic minorities need to be developed further**

Examining the Test:

Evaluation of the Police Standard Entrance Test

1. Introduction and research outline

In June 1995, the Scottish Council for Research in Education was contracted to undertake a small scale study of the Standard Entrance Test (SET) for the police forces in Scotland. The study was commissioned by The Scottish Office Central Research Unit on behalf of the Home Department.

The first phase of the research was based upon an analysis of extant recruitment and selection statistics from the eight police forces in Scotland. Information was provided by a variety of respondents: mainly serving officers with recent experience of, or responsibility for, selection of new recruits. We sought to achieve a broad mix of respondents from disparate ranks and forces. The second phase of the study was based upon an in-depth examination of procedures within two forces. These two case studies were chosen to ensure coverage of recruitment and policing in both urban and rural areas.

The data collection for the first phase was completed in August 1995. It included preliminary sensitising interviews in four locations and an analysis of existing recruitment statistics and some supplementary information from the eight forces.

The second phase of the study, conducted in September and October 1995, consisted of an examination of the implementation of the SET in two forces. This was designed primarily to test hypotheses emerging from the statistical analysis and also to provide illuminative evidence of the SET in the context of the demands made on policing practices.

The findings of both stages have been incorporated into this final report. It comprises eleven sections, of which this introduction is the first. In Section 2, we outline the aims of the research and move on to set it in context in Section 3. Sections 4 and 5 describe the SET, the evaluation questions and the methods we utilised to answer them. Sections 6 to 10 comprise our account of what emerged from the data in respect of the following themes: validity, reliability, equality, utility and acceptability of the SET. Additionally, we explore further the concepts of a 'functional map' in Section 8 and equal opportunities in Section 9. In Section 10, we place the SET into the concept of a 'recruitment pathway'. Section 11 takes the form of a brief conclusion and recommendations for action.

2. Aims of the research

The study was commissioned against a background of rapid change in both Scottish society and the police forces which work to provide protection for the public and fair and efficient law enforcement. The remit of the present study is to evaluate the current Standard Entrance Test (SET), and not to develop a new test.[1] The main aims of the evaluation are to:

- address issues of the SET's suitability as a screening and selection tool in the light of changing demands being made of police officers
- determine whether it conforms to equal opportunity legislation
- assess the efficiency and effectiveness of its administration.

Recommendations for updating and improving the SET are also to be made as appropriate. The findings from the study could underpin future revisions of the test to ensure that a more valid and equitable instrument is developed.

3. The research in context

It is generally acknowledged that the quality of service organisations, such as the police force, depends on the standard of people that it is able to recruit, select, train and retain. A number of concerns have been expressed regarding the efficacy of testing as a selection instrument. Of particular relevance here is the experience of the design and introduction of a revised test in England and Wales in 1992. The Police Initial Recruitment Test (PIRT) was intended to:

- meet the requirements of the legislation relating to race and sex discrimination
- be demonstrably related to the needs of the job
- screen out applicants who lacked the necessary education and aptitude
- place emphasis on relevant skills

At the same time the test should remain easy to administer (Home Office Circular 89/1991). However, difficulties have arisen during the implementation of the PIRT which raise doubts about its ability to screen applicants effectively. We shall return to this point later when we consider the formidable recruitment task faced by one of our case study forces. In developing a new test for Scotland we should seek to learn from these experiences.

A number of studies shed light on the recruitment and selection process and the competences required of a police officer. Of particular interest is Gilbert, 1992; McGurk *et al*, 1987; Elliott *et al*, 1987. Additionally, Somekh and Ebbutt, working at the University of East Anglia, collaborated with the Norfolk Constabulary to develop a method for accrediting prior

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[1] Designing a valid and reliable test is *per force* a lengthy procedure and would not be possible within the timescale of the current project.

experiential learning (APEL). We suggest that a lengthy review of the literature would not be particularly helpful, but we do provide an overview of the main sources which we have consulted and the strengths of each. This is displayed in Table 1 below. Additionally, we identify a number of key concepts which could inform an effective and efficient recruitment process.

Table 1: An overview of a selection of previous studies of police officers

Researchers	Study	Strengths
Elliott *et al* (1989)	Study of 24 police constables: 12 rated 'above average' & 12 rated 'average'	By using the Behavioural Event interview, this study provides in-depth evidence of the **skills repertoires of the more successful performers**
Gilbert (1992)	Study of the potential of the 'biodata' technique to ensure equal opportunities in recruitment to the police	Evaluates the concept of 'biodata' and suggests ways in which a **biographical questionnaire** could be standardised for national use
MacDonald *et al* (1990)	Study of Queensland Police Service: a critique of training by objectives	Emphasises the process of **organisational and occupational socialisation** which recruits to the police must learn
McGurk *et al* (1993)	Extensive study of job analysis & training needs of police officers. Utilised four techniques: Position Analysis Questionnaires; Repertory Grid; Critical Incident Technique & Task Analysis	Generates map from officers showing the tasks that constables perform **most frequently, find most difficult and consider most important**
Scottish Police College (1995)	Training needs analysis; on-going study at the Scottish Police College. Utilised the individual and group methods adopted by McGurk	Identification of tasks performed by Scottish officers. Outcome is a list of tasks **most frequently performed and those rated most difficult**

From these studies a number of common themes emerge. There is general agreement that both society and the nature of policing have changed dramatically during the past decade. Additionally, we know that demographic trends show a decline in the number of young people in the 19 to 24 age category in Scotland. For example, in the years 1991-1994 the number of people in this age group fell by 44,000 (rounded figure, Registrar General's mid-year estimates). Other documents (for example, ACPO, 1992; HMIC, 1992) have articulated the common purpose and values of the police: to uphold the law fairly; to prevent crime and arrest criminals; to keep the peace and to protect the community. There is far less unanimity concerning the nature of the job; the skills, attitudes and knowledge required to undertake it successfully or even whether the common purpose is achievable.

Most of the research studies referred to above identified a mismatch between the tasks which police officers most **frequently perform** and those which they consider to be **important** or find **most difficult**. Our own evidence, which we will present in later sections, supports this conclusion. Some of our respondents suggested that there is, in fact, not one but several jobs contained in the one job title 'police officer'. This makes recruitment and selection particularly

difficult and has led researchers to seek both job specific and generic competences. For example, although in their initial analysis Elliott *et al (op cit.)* identified twenty-two abilities in the good police officer, these were clustered around four cross-generic abilities. The 'good' performer was able to:

- synthesise detailed information into a 'total picture' of the situation
- elicit and grasp other people's feelings and concerns
- self-monitor one's own actions in the light of the situation and their effects on it
- exercise initiative and take decisive action as opposed to adopting a passive attitude towards situations.

Clearly, **situational understanding, empathy, proactivity** and **discretion** are crucial ingredients. Significantly, none is a particularly unambiguous concept. For example, in Elliott *et al* 's definition of discretion as: 'law enforcement ... in a manner which is appropriate and sensitive to the personal, social and cultural context', what might be *appropriate and sensitive* are particularly difficult to define. A number of our respondents talked about using discretion. How the selection process identifies candidates with the ability to develop these higher level skills, such as discretion, is central to this research. We shall return to this issue in Sections 8 and 9 where we report the findings of our case studies.

The demanding nature of policing is a recurring theme in most studies: not only the job, *per se*, but the context in which it takes place. MacDonald *et al (op cit.)* goes so far as to suggest that in an Australian context 'policing by objectives serves only to obscure the contentious, ambiguous and incompatible demands created by trying to fulfil the police mandate'. He argues that police officers everywhere are cynical about their own organisation. They feel that support and trust, which would enable them to operate as responsible professionals or encourage them to model such professionalism for new members, are absent. They have little or no say in policy making, no voice in the forum that should characterise a professional community. As educational researchers, we wonder how unique this critique of police work is. Certainly, other researchers (McPherson & Raab, 1988; Humes, 1994) have levied similar criticisms at the education sector in Scotland. Humes (1994) specifically refers to the 'decoupling' of educational policy-making from the management of education. We suspect that a similar process may have affected the police. Certainly, a number of our respondents expressed cynical views and requested us to confirm that they were cynical. They reported a gulf between their own perceptions of the job and the reality of meeting imposed performance indicators (*e.g. response* times). Many articulated their increasing levels of frustration at the mismatch between their reasons for entering the force and their perceived reality of the job.

These larger issues are undoubtedly being addressed in other fora. However, the particular nature of the job and the strength of the organisational culture in which new recruits learn, have a direct bearing on the recruitment and selection process. The validity of the process is

dependent upon an accurate analysis of all the situational influences, and like many other organisations, the police must avoid **organisational cloning** *viz.* a tendency for officers to chose candidates similar to themselves with whom they feel most comfortable. The tendency to select in one's own image is well documented in management literature (Heilman, 1979).

These are some of the issues which emerge from the literature which have informed the present study. However, the present study is significant in two respects:

- it is a Scottish wide study of the SET
- it is undertaken with the full co-operation of all eight police forces and will, in fact, build upon current work being undertaken at the Scottish Police College [2]

The latter point is of particular interest here because ideally a fully comprehensive functional map of the work of a police officer should build upon and extend existing maps generated from both within and outwith Scotland. This emerging map should then underpin any testing procedure. It should be noted that within a very short research project, we have not attempted to develop a new map, but rather to complement existing work. In particular, we sought to identify aspects of policing in Scotland which do not appear in other researchers' functional analyses.

In the following sections, we report our findings in respect of the efficacy of the SET as a selection instrument. Additionally, we would argue that not only should the test efficiently and effectively select candidates who have the potential to become good police officers, but ideally it should be based upon a functional map identified and recognised by the police themselves. Only then can its acceptability and face validity be assured.

The main points to emerge from the literature are:

- **agreement that both society and policing are changing**
- **development of disparate functional maps of a police officer's job**
- **general agreement that policing is demanding**
- **recognition of the relationship between job competences and context, *viz.* situational understanding**

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2 A training needs analysis is currently being undertaken by the Research and Development Division of the Scottish Police College and preliminary findings were consulted in this study.

4. The Police Standard Entrance Test (SET)

The Standard Entrance Test (SET) is the test taken by most candidates to the Scottish police forces.[3] It is a timed 'paper and pencil' type test administered by police officers. The test consists of 90 questions, each of which carries one mark when answered correctly. The questions were developed to match the level of an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) required for the ordinary grade of the Scottish Certificate in Education (SCE). We shall see later that following the curriculum changes in Scottish education, *viz.* from ordinary to standard grade, this assumption may no longer be valid. In particular, the nature of teaching, learning and assessment to include large elements of project-based investigations do not articulate with a norm-referenced selection examination.

There are three different versions of the SET and each contains the following four sections:

- **Listening comprehension** (25 items/marks) seeks to test the candidate's ability to listen and understand a series of tape-recorded questions
- **Data interpretation** (17 items/marks) requires the candidate to extract and interpret information presented in graphs, pie charts and tables
- **Calculation and number work** (15 items/marks) requires candidates to demonstrate knowledge of basic arithmetic, fractions and percentages, volume, angles, and scientific notation without the aid of a calculator
- **Reading comprehension** (33 items/marks) is a series of short passages, some with missing words, through which candidates must show their understanding of written English

In its current format, the test was introduced in 1985 following a review by the Godfrey Thomson Unit at Edinburgh University. We understand that it was piloted on a group of recruits at the Scottish Police College. As this group was not representative of the total population any differences, for example, in mathematical ability, between probationer police and the general population would be built into the test. More recently, doubts about the test's continuing validity and relevance have been expressed. The Central Conference of Recruiting and Training Officers (CCRTO)[4], whose members have extensive direct experience, generally feels that the SET may be outdated - hence the commissioning of this study.

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3 Serving officers of other UK police forces are exempt but this does not include members of the British Transport Police, etc. or Special Constables.

4 A subcommittee of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland's (ACPOS) Training Committee.

4.1 Evaluation questions and methods

The specification issued by The Scottish Office together with the issues which we identified in the literature (see Section 4) helped us formulate a set of evaluation questions. These include:

- What function(s) does the SET currently perform in the recruitment and selection process for the police forces in Scotland? Is practice uniform both within and across forces?
- How effective is the current SET? In particular, does it select candidates who have the ability to become good police officers? Conversely, do candidates who have the qualities to become good police officers fail the test?
- How efficient is the test? What resources does its implementation require and how cost-effective is this use of resources?
- How fair is the SET? Are any particular groups of candidates disadvantaged by the SET? Do members of some groups appear to fail the test in disproportionately high numbers?
- What is the test actually testing? Are the test criteria those which articulate with the demands of modern policing practices in Scotland? If not, what recommendations can be made to bring the selection process and the requirements of the job closer together?
- What function(s) do police forces want the SET to perform. How, if at all, would they prefer it to change? Conversely, which recommendations for change would they find unacceptable?

In order to answer these questions, the study was undertaken in two phases: an examination of the test as an instrument; and two case studies to explore its effectiveness in the context of current police practices. A variety of research methods was used in each phase. These included:

Phase 1:

- semi-structured in-depth interviews
- analysis of extant recruitment and selection data
- an examination of each section of the SET

Phase 2:

- case study work in two forces including observation, behavioural event-type interviews and focus group meetings
- circulation of emerging issues to all eight forces using a modified Delphi method,[5] and analysis of the responses.

Our analysis of statistical data was facilitated by the excellent recruitment records maintained by each force and could not have been undertaken without their support. We present the results in

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[5] It is thought that the Delphi method was first developed in the Rand Corporation in California in the 1950s. A panel of experts was consulted on issues where previously there had been no consensus. In many ways, this would appear to be an appropriate method for exploring perceptions of the SET.

Section 7. Additionally, two forces gave us access to undertake the case study fieldwork. The latter included a series of behavioural event-type interviews in which respondents were asked to identify actual events in their work: one which they thought they handled well; and a second which was less well-handled. This technique, originally developed by McBer and Company in the USA (reported by McClelland 1973),[6] was adapted by Elliott, *op cit.* Both principal researchers of this study had utilised similar interviews before: Wilson to identify the effects of multi-skilling in the oil industry and Somekh to accredit prior managerial experiences for continuing professional development. The interview format developed for our evaluation is displayed in Appendix 10.

The data generated from the behavioural event interviews were extremely rich. In total 38 separate events were described to us from which we generated an amended functional map of policing in Scotland. We discuss this in Section 8. Additionally, the events provided illuminative data on equal opportunities in practice (see Section 9). In particular, we were able to explore the issue of ethnicity, which it had not been possible to explore in a statistical analysis. This is important for two reasons: Scotland is an increasingly multi-racial society, and the police wish to reflect more closely the composition of the communities which they serve.

Finally, to ensure that our findings were not idiosyncratic to the two forces in which we undertook the fieldwork, we circulated a set of emerging issues to all eight forces. This Delphi method entailed consulting a group of experts - in this case Chief Constables or their representatives - and incorporating their comments into the research process. Similarities and differences soon emerged. The findings from all phases of the research are now discussed.

5. Emerging issues

In order to apprise the research team of current recruitment and selection procedures a number of preliminary sensitising interviews was conducted with key informants in a sample of police forces (the topic guide is displayed in Appendix 1). Interviews were conducted in four forces and the Scottish Police College. The main issues to emerge included the following:

- Considerable expertise in recruitment and selection procedures has been developed by police forces but this varies across the eight forces
- Each force had developed a slightly different process, which we now refer to as a 'recruitment pathway' (see Appendix 7), the significance of which we will develop more fully in Section 10
- Recruitment and selection made significant demands on staff especially in those forces which were currently actively recruiting

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6 The behavioural event interview developed by McBer and Company provides actual examples of behaviour in the workplace. As a further stage, respondents can be asked to reflect on their behaviour. We would argue that the quality of the data generated is much richer than that derived from other forms of interviews

- A Training Needs Analysis was in the process of being developed by the Scottish Police College

Perhaps, of greater significance, we formed the impression that amongst those with direct experience of recruitment there was little support for the SET in its current format. No one argued for the abolition of testing *per se:* however, most were able to cite anomalies in the process and felt that the SET failed to identify candidates with the potential to develop into good police officers.

The main points from this section can be summarised as follows:

- **recruitment and selection is an important but time consuming activity for the police**
- **there is a wide variation in practices across the eight police forces including, for example, the use of differential pass marks in the SET**
- **each force has developed a slightly different recruitment pathway which affects the role and function of the SET**
- **there appears to be a desire to improve the SET as part of the selection process**

6. SET as a test instrument

A number of activities was undertaken to examine the SET as a test instrument. These included: the observation of its administration with a group of candidates in one of the police forces; post-test interviews with a sample of eight candidates and assessment of the test by a group of independent educational assessors. The results are described below.

6.1 Test administration

We observed the test being administered to a group of twenty-five candidates in a large room. Although the room was light and well-ventilated, some candidates were disadvantaged in the distance they were seated from a low-powered tape player. The atmosphere was very formal, some would argue intimidating, and the speed with which instructions were announced by an officer in uniform appeared too fast for some candidates. These observations were confirmed by candidates in post-test interviews.

6.1.1 The candidate's perspective

A small number of interviews was conducted with candidates immediately following their completion of the SET. Their perspective is important. All appeared subdued by the recent

experience of the SET but, significantly, none reported that it would discourage them from joining the police force. There is obviously a need to explore more fully how candidates develop and maintain their **concept of a 'career'** in the police; what occupational interests contribute to the development of this concept, and what recruiters might do both to identify and strengthen the identification process.

All but one of our interviewees experienced difficulties with Sections 2 and 3, *viz.* data interpretation and calculation and number work. Without the aid of a calculator, and having left school several years ago, these respondents reported that they were unable to deal with many of the questions in those sections. This paradox between seeking mature applicants and testing school age-related formal mathematical knowledge is clearly one which must be resolved. We know from theories of **situational learning** that formal mathematics taught in schools is very different from the maths which is practised in everyday life. [7] We would also argue that the mathematical knowledge required by the SET bears little, or no, relationship to policing. The evidence from our case studies confirms that police constables rarely, if at all, utilise formal mathematical processes. The most extensive calculation, which was described to us, required the officer to calculate the value of goods fraudulently acquired from a discount warehouse. The officer reported that she experienced more difficulties with the volume of goods than she did with the calculations, *per se*. She describes this as:

> *It took two of us two and a half days just to tie and write the production labels and fill in all the sheets and get them lodged ... then it took me four and a half days to write the information which turned out to be something like forty-five pages of law ... I happened to be court officer when it was called at court ... but the solicitor for some reason hadn't shown up to act on their behalf and it looked as if the case was going to be deserted.*
>
> Police Constable, Female

This example also demonstrates the need to form working relationships with members of other professions. This is a point to which we shall return in the discussion of functional maps in Section 8.

6.1.2 Professional assessment

Although SET is singular, implying that there is only one test, in fact there are three different versions of the current test. Forces may use which ever version they wish: each is intended to be identical in what it purports to test and the level of difficulty. As we discovered, this is an erroneous assumption. In order to identify problems inherent in the current test, including the comparability of different versions, as distinct from its administration, a group of three professional colleagues from within SCRE independently assessed the SET. A guide was

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[7] See, for example, Brown *et al* (1989) who explored the differences between maths taught in schools and practised in life.

developed for this exercise, a copy of which can be found in Appendix 2. The assessors were asked to identify issues concerning:

- presentation
- readability
- language
- gender and ethnic stereotyping, and
- other possibly discriminatory/unfair items

Their comments are summarised below.

6.1.3 Visual presentation

All the assessors thought that the printing, presentation and reprographic qualities of the SET were poor. Not only did these present difficulties for candidates but also created a less than favourable professional image for the police force. In particular, the assessors reported that inexact graphs in the data interpretation section could invalidate the results.

6.1.4 Readability/difficulty

With respect to readability the assessors identified that ambiguous language was the main problem. Additionally, many of the items were confusing simply because they contained out of date information or terms with which candidates may not be familiar, for example, use of both metric and imperial measurements. It is usually easier for people to solve problems when these are properly **contextualised** and with **familiar aids to problem-solving**. Again, the assessors noted the absence of calculators, as did the candidates.

6.1.5 Plain language

All three assessors agreed that the sentence completion exercise contained too many difficult words. To supplement the assessors' opinions, Flesch readability scores (see section 6.4) were obtained for each of the comprehension and interpretation sections in the three forms of the SET. A candidate's ability to write continuous prose, as required in police reports, [8] is not tested by the SET. At least one force utilises an **'interview aid form'** for this purpose (see Appendix 9). As we shall see later (Section 8), a number of our respondents identified the ability to record events **clearly and accurately** as a *sine qua non* for police work. A number even suggested that a perusal of evidence forms would indicate the extent to which standards of spelling and grammar in use have declined in recent times. If this is true, then we suspect it is related both to the fact that neither ability is tested in the SET, and also the changing emphasis on spelling and grammar in the current wide-ranging school curriculum.

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[8] The on-line connections which some police forces have established with procurators fiscal demand a high level of literacy. Additionally, the rules of evidence in Scottish courts require police officers to maintain accurate written records. Both of these skills, *viz.* to write clear concise English and use newer technologies are not tested by the SET.

6.1.6 Stereotyping

Our assessors did not detect any evidence of either racial or gender stereotyping in the SET. However, in our earlier sensitising interviews, one police officer pointed out that the listening comprehension section of Form 1 of the SET, which included a topic on frozen embryo research, may be disturbing or offensive to some groups. The assessors also drew attention to this item and suggested that it was inappropriate in a multi-cultural society.

6.2 Readability test

As we pointed out earlier, there are three versions of the SET which are intended to be comparable. Individual forces use different forms with different groups of applicants. Therefore, it is important that the forms are in fact comparable. To supplement the assessors' views and as a measure of comparability, the reading comprehension sections of the three forms of the SET were subjected to a readability test using the Flesch method. The findings show that there are important differences between the forms, both in length and levels of difficulty. Form 1 contains 91 words more than Form 2 and 141 more than Form 3. Form 3 has considerably fewer lines and sentences than the other two forms. Clearly, the three versions of the test are not comparable in level of reading difficulty.

The results are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Textual differences between the three versions of the SET

Counts:	Form 1	Form 2	Form 3	All
Words	641	550	500	1,691
Characters	3,914	3,661	3,119	10,694
Lines	48	45	39	132
Paragraphs	8	7	8	23
Sentences	25	24	17	66
Averages:				
Words per sentence	26	23	29	26
Characters per word	6.1	6.6	6.2	6.3

The Flesch Reading Ease Index classifies text into seven bands ranging from very easy to very difficult (outlined in Appendix 3). For example, a Flesch grade six indicates a text that can be understood by an average English-speaking reader who has completed six years of education.

From our examination of the SET, it becomes apparent that the versions differ in the levels of reading ease/difficulty. Forms 1 and 3 can be categorised as 'difficult' (see Appendix 3); while Form 2 falls into the 'very difficult' category of the Flesch test - equivalent to university degree level. Interestingly, MacDonald *et al (op cit.)* in his review of police selection in Queensland,

advises that the police service should become an all graduate profession with postgraduate training akin to teacher training. This reflects the move towards the professionalisation of a number of jobs, see, for example, community pharmacists (Wilson *et al*, 1995).[9] Currently, approximately 10% of officers are graduates, however, we formed the impression that a move towards an all graduate profession would be unwelcome. With specific reference to the SET, it would appear that those candidates who pass Form 2 may already be demonstrating reading abilities equivalent to graduate level.

In contrast, Form 1 contains the most number of sentences in the passive voice which are generally recognised as more difficult to understand than ones in the active voice. The results are summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Readability of SET Forms 1-3

Readability Index	Form 1	Form 2	Form 3	All
Passive sentences (%)	51	29	29	37
Flesch Reading Ease	42.9	25.8	33.7	34.8
Flesch Grade Level	14.0	17.0	15.4	15.2

In conclusion our findings suggest that the following factors underlie differences in reading ease of the three forms used:

- **independent assessors have identified anomalies in the test indicating that it is both ambiguous and outdated in parts**
- **a readability test has highlighted significant differences in the three versions of the SET which compromise comparability**
- **the level of reading difficulty of version 2 of the SET equates to university degree level**

These factors influence the validity and reliability of the SET which we will now consider further using test data from the eight police forces.

7. Survey

7.1 The sample

HMIC annually collates statistics from police forces in Scotland regarding, *inter alia*, the number of applicants (*e.g.* HMIC, 1995). However, for our purposes these are not sufficiently detailed. Therefore, we requested information about a sample of applicants and their

[9] In a recent study of community pharmacists, Wilson *et al* (1995) identified a similar continuous upgrading of the profession of pharmacists.

performance on the SET from the forces' existing personnel records. Forces identified a random sample of applicants who sat the SET during the three years, 1992-1994. A copy of the *proforma* can be found in Appendix 5. The sample was designed to be proportional to the number of serving officers in each force. It generated information on 1,153 candidates including at least ten female candidates from each force.
The distribution for each force is summarised in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Sample of SET Candidates 1992-1994

Force	Initial sample Nos.	(%)	Strength	Weight	Adjusted sample Nos.	(%)
Central Scotland Police	60	(5.2)	652	1.087	65	(4.6)
Dum. & Gal. Constabulary	61	(5.3)	384	0.64	39	(2.7)
Fife Constabulary	60	(5.2)	780	1.3	78	(5.5)
Grampian Police	90	(7.8)	1,178	1.309	118	(8.3)
Lothian & Borders Police	178	(15.4)	2,522	1.417	252	(17.7)
Northern Constabulary	194	(16.8)	654	0.337	65	(4.6)
Strathclyde Police	420	(36.4)	6,954	1.656	696	(48.9)
Tayside Police	90	(7.8)	1,085	1.206	109	(7.6)
Total	1,153		14,209		1,422	

Note: Strength figures are for 1994. Source: HMIC (1995)

It should be noted that the original number of cases was weighted to ensure that the sample corresponded exactly with the proportion of officers in each force. This research convenience improved the generalisability of our findings.

The data comprised information relating to the age, gender, ethnic origin and educational qualifications of the candidates and their SET test scores. The identity of individual candidates was protected. A copy of the test scores can be found in Appendix 6. In the sample approximately 95% had not previously sat the SET or a similar police entrance test.

There was an almost equal distribution of candidates across the three versions of the SET: forms 1-3 were sat by approximately 33%, 32% and 36% of our sample, respectively.

7.1.1 The candidates

In our sample 24% of candidates were female and 76% were male. This over represents women in comparison with the actual number of serving women police officers. Figures for 1994 indicate that of a total 14,209 officers, 1,677 (12%) are female (HMIC, 1995). However, all our respondents indicated that the proportions will change as a consequence of the number of more recently recruited female officers: 26% of recruits were female in 1993 and 27% in 1994.

26

The number of candidates from an ethnic minority background was extremely small: too low to be statistically significant. We have addressed this issue through the case studies in Phase 2 of the research. One was sited in an area with the highest proportion in Scotland of people from ethnic minorities. The breakdown of the sample is presented in Table 5. Although not statistically significant, we note that two of the twelve candidates from ethnic minority groups were graduates; two possessed other academic qualifications; one had up to two Highers and two had attained Standard Grade or below.[10]

Table 5: Number of candidates by ethnic background

Ethnic group	Nos.	%
White	1,382	97.4
Pakistani	8	0.6
Indian	1	0.1
Black	3	0.2
Unknown	24	1.7
Total	1,418	100.0

Note: 3 missing

The SET is part of a lengthy selection process, therefore our sample can only be a snapshot of candidates at one point in time. Some had failed the SET and would be withdrawn from the process; others were resitting the examination and those who had passed would proceed to the next stage of selection. From the total sample, 265 were offered appointments including one who declined the offer, ten were awaiting decisions of appointment, 1,156 were not appointed (includes cases pending and six cases for whom information was missing). Overall, approximately one-fifth of candidates were appointed and two-fifths were screened out by other methods.

Approximately one in five candidates had a university degree or other academic qualification. However, almost 50% had achieved only SCE ordinary/standard grade or below. The effects of this range on the SET is significant and should be taken into account if the test is redesigned. The results are summarised in Table 6.

The results also point to a relationship between educational attainment, pass rates and appointment to the forces. The higher a candidate's educational achievement level, the higher the likelihood of passing the SET and by extension being appointed. One exception to this trend is candidates who possess 'other academic' qualifications *viz.* HNCs, HNDs, SVQs level 4, and this phenomenon would require further exploration. We suspect that it may be related to the

[10] Information about the educational background of four of the twelve candidates from ethnic minority groups was missing from the survey data.

dissonance between the modularised course format of competence-based qualifications and the design of the current SET.

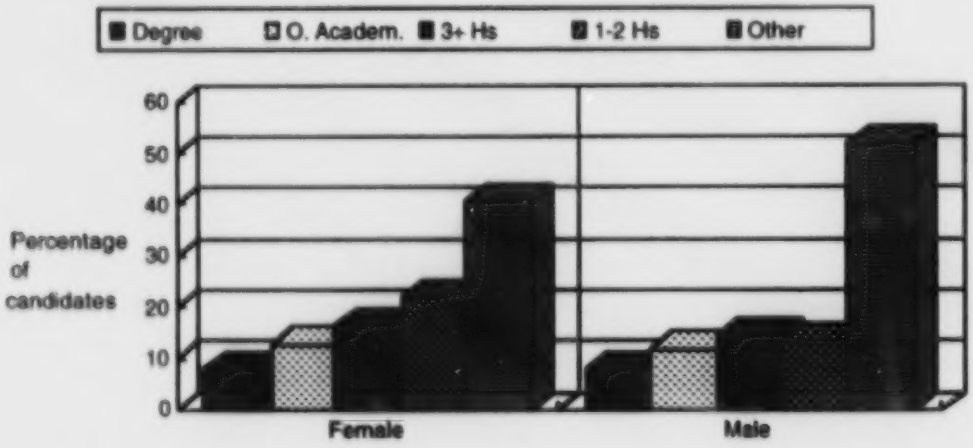
Table 6: Pass/fail rates and appointments by educational achievement level

Educational Achievement Level	Fail %	Pass %	Appointed %
SCE standard or below	48.9	51.1	15.9
1-2 Highers	29.2	70.8	21.1
3+ Highers	18.3	81.7	26.1
Other academic	37.1	62.9	14.0
Degree	5.8	94.2	33.2
Total	36.4	63.6	19.4

Note: Number of missing candidates: 87
Pass marks vary between 50% and 60% across the eight forces.

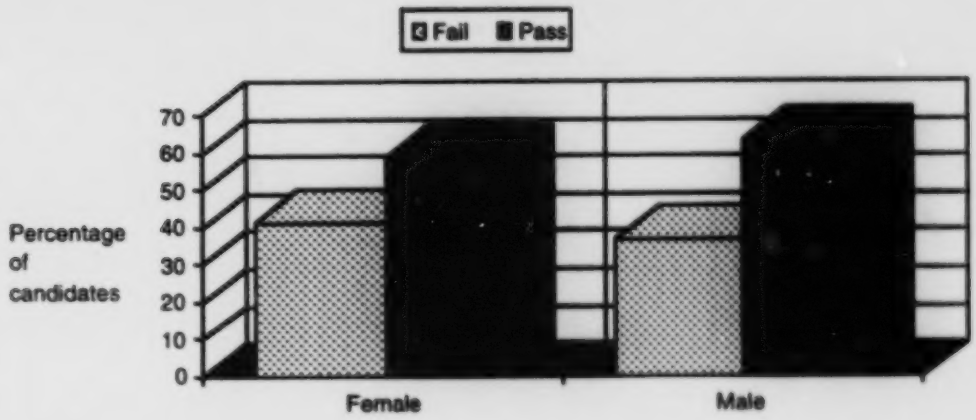
It should also be noted that female candidates were on average better qualified than their male counterparts. Over 60% of women, as opposed to 48% of men, had attained more than SCE ordinary grade or equivalent (see Figure 1, below).

Figure 1: The educational level of female and male candidates (Percent)



However, as can be seen from Figure 2, the position of male and female candidates was reversed when we consider pass rates. Women performed slightly less well than men, with 41% failing the test compared with only 36% of men.

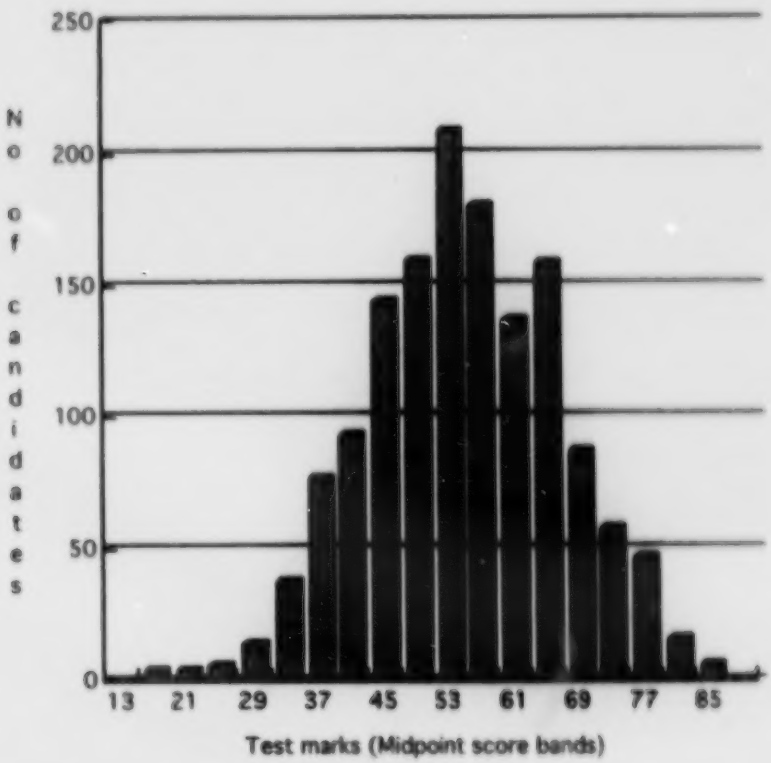
Figure 2: Fail/Pass rates for female and male candidates (Percent)



7.1.2 Test scores

On moving to a more detailed examination of test scores, our analysis showed a distribution of scores akin to the 'normal distribution curve'. This we display in Figure 3, below.

Figure 3: Number of candidates by test scores achieved



Mean 54.656 Median 54.444 Mode 53.333
Range 71.111 Std deviation 11.685 Valid cases 1422
Note: For presentational reasons scores have been banded and only midpoints are shown.

Similar analyses for each of the four sections of the SET reveal that the distribution of scores on each section is very different. The results are illustrated in Figures A-D of Appendix 6. It can be seen that the distribution of scores for listening comprehension is 'pointed' indicating a centre around the 'mid-point' of the graph. The distribution of scores for Section 2, data interpretation, indicates that there are more candidates scoring below the midpoint. The data in this case are said to be 'skewed'. This phenomenon is much more pronounced in the scores derived for Section 3, calculation and number work. From this we conclude that more candidates have difficulties with those two sections than with Sections 1 and 4.

From the analysis of the separate data sets, we now know that female candidates tend to score lower in Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the SET than do their male counterparts. This finding is statistically significant in respect of the maths related Sections 2 and 3, see Appendix 15. Females tend to score higher on the listening comprehension section but this difference is not statistically significant.

One of the case study forces provided us with equal opportunities monitoring statistics for three consecutive years. Our analysis of this data indicates a similar trend for members of ethnic minority groups and this issue is discussed further in Section 9.

7.2 Implications

The data set collected is very rich and it has not been possible to analyse it fully during a short research period. However, some important points do emerge which have implications for recruitment practices. We have established a statistical relationship between scores and two factors. These we now consider.

7.2.1 Educational attainment of candidate

Firstly, a fairly strong relationship exists between candidates' level of educational achievement and their overall scores on the SET (.34 correlation). If we consider each section of the SET, the relationship is comparatively stronger for Sections 3 and 4 (calculation and number work, and reading comprehension). The most likely explanation is the difficulties experienced by some candidates in Section 3 and the high number of marks contributed to the overall score from Section 4 (just over a third of the total mark).

Secondly, the relationship between educational attainment level and passing the test is somewhat lower (.28 correlation).

Thirdly, the relationship between the educational attainment level of candidates and their subsequent appointment to the force is not very strong (.10 correlation). This is to be expected given that a pass mark in the SET is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for the appointment of most candidates.

7.2.2 Prior experience of entrance tests

Whether a candidate has previously sat the SET does not seem to be related to their performance on subsequent tests or correlate with any other variable. This may, in part, be a consequence of unsuccessful candidates not receiving feedback on their performance and therefore, unable to prepare for future tests. More likely it results from setting the pass mark of between 50 and 60% at the point where most candidates are 'bunched' (see Figure 1). This result has implications for the efficacy of selection procedures.

In sum, the main issues arising from an analysis of the test data would indicate that:

- **the higher the educational level of candidates, the more likely they are to pass the test**
- **candidates with a higher level of educational qualifications have a slightly increased chance of being appointed**
- **there are significant differences between different sections and also different versions of the SET**
- **candidates experience difficulties particularly with Sections 2 and 3 of the SET**
- **female and male candidates have different prior educational attainment levels and achieve slightly different scores on the SET**
- **a positive relationship exists between candidates' prior educational attainment and passing the SET**
- **the SET should be perceived within the context of a recruitment pathway** (discussed in full in Section 10)
- **male candidates perform better than female candidates on Sections 2 and 3 of the SET**

We now move on to consider the SET in the light of a developing functional map of police work in Scotland.

8. A functional map of the police constable

8.1 Introduction

A 'functional map' is a description of what employees in particular occupations do in order to achieve their job's purpose. The competences, *viz.* skills, attitudes and underpinning knowledge, which they demonstrate are identified and 'mapped'. For training purposes one would normally focus on those competences required to do the job well, but for equal opportunities it is more common to map competences needed to do the job adequately. In this chapter we describe how we utilised existing functional maps of policing to identify specific competences required of the police in Scotland.

The main work of Phase 2 consisted of two case studies sited within one division in each of two forces. These were chosen to explore the differences that may exist between rural and urban police work, and also issues of equality and ethnicity. In each of these divisions, the research team conducted a series of interviews and focus group meetings.

The purpose of the mapping exercise was to evaluate the appropriateness of the Police Standard Entrance Test by complementing existing functional maps with Scottish data. These were our starting points and in this section we compare and contrast them with our own data (see Table 8). The development of a comprehensive study of the competences involved in Scottish police work is outwith the scope of this current research. However, particular attention was paid to contextual aspects of police work *viz.* environment and culture, in which new recruits must develop and demonstrate their competence. These, we suggest, are particularly relevant to the face validity of the SET.

8.2 Method

Each case study conformed to the same research design. Researchers spent one morning familiarising themselves with each division; touring the area in a police car and talking informally with a number of police officers. A series of in-depth interviews, based upon a modified Behavioural Event Interview, was conducted. A total of 19 officers of various ranks took part (see Appendix 12). This technique, first developed by McBer and Company (McClelland, 1973) had been adapted by Elliott (Elliott *et al,* 1989) to identify the competences required of the good police officer. Each of our interviews lasted approximately one and a half hours, and respondents were asked to identify two policing situations in which they had personally been involved: one which they thought they handled well, and a second less well. The interview schedule is displayed in Appendix 10.

Following preliminary analysis of the interview data, four focus group meetings [11] were conducted with officers whom we had not previously interviewed. Issues emerging from individual interviews were explored further within each group. The interactions both amongst participants and with researchers generated additional illuminative evidence which validated some of the emerging issues. The composition of each group and the topic guide used are displayed in Appendices 12 and 13 respectively.

The evidence from individual interviews, observations and focus group meetings was analysed by utilising three broad categories:

- tasks
- attributes and attitudes
- knowledge and cognitive skills.

The bands were in effect inventories of tasks carried out by police officers; knowledge & cognitive skills that were used in the course of their duties, and attributes & attitudes that officers displayed in the performance of their work. From the inventories a functional map was created by allocating the codes to coherent groups within each band through a re-iterative process.

8.3 Findings

The main categories are listed in Table 7, below, with the full set displayed in Appendix 11.

Table 7: The main categories of the SCRE functional map of police work

Task skills	Attributes & attitudes	Knowledge & cognitive skills
Communication	Attributes relating to self	Knowledge of planning
Information handling	Attitudes relating to others	Knowledge of decision-making
Policing		Awareness
		People skills
		Scots Law & procedures

Note: The full set can be found in Appendix 11.

[11] Focus groups have been used extensively in market research to elicit respondents' attitudes, perceptions and opinions. However, they are increasingly seen as a useful qualitative research tool by social scientists. Morgan (1988) provides practical advice on how to set up focus groups and suggests that their main strength is their ability to: 'explore topics and generate hypotheses and ... puts a priority on not repeating the received wisdom in a field.'

In our analysis, we highlight the implications of functional mapping for the recruitment process. In particular, we juxtapose our own findings with those which emerged from four other studies carried out in this field. There are sufficient similarities to conclude, tentatively, that our map is valid. However, the studies were of disparate scale and employed significantly different resources over time. Care should, therefore, be taken extrapolating from our current relatively small-scale project.

The focus and main categories associated with four studies in police work is displayed in Table 8, which also displays the main findings of our study. A comparison of the lists in this table indicates a number of similarities. All refer to:

- people and communication skills
- information processing skills
- organisational decision-making or pro-activity.

Despite the degree of unanimity, there are some differences in the rankings allocated and areas listed. These, we suspect, may have resulted from the disparate methodologies employed, and the timing and siting of the studies, rather than the nature of the job, *per se*. For example, dealing with bombs was classified as a very important and difficult task in one of the English studies (McGurk *et al*, 1993); whereas it has not, to our knowledge, appeared in any Scottish study, including our own. This particular difference may disappear as a result of the cease fire in Northern Ireland; demonstrating how the police officer's job changes and develops over time.

Table 8: Headings and main categories used in five studies (chronological order)

Elliott *et al* (1989) *Professional Abilities*	**Home Office (1991)** *Areas of Competence (appraisal for constables)*	**McGurk *et al* (1993)** *Skills Directory*	**PABS (1994)** *Appraisal Performance Indicators (draft)*	**SCRE (1995)** *Functional Map*
Judgement & professional knowledge - Able to assess the total situation - Able to self-monitor own conduct **Communication and relationships with others** - Able to elicit and grasp feelings and concerns which underpin people's behaviour rather than accepting the surface meaning of words and actions **Practical effectiveness** - Able to exercise initiative and take decisive action as opposed to remaining passive (pro-activity)	Communication and relationship with others Practical effectiveness Problem solving, decision making and planning Knowledge Investigation Written communication Monitoring personal performance Conduct and standards	**People skills** - Positive attitude to public - Communication - with colleagues and public - Relationships with colleagues **Task skills** - Knowledge of law and procedures - Paperwork - Risk conscious - Solving problems - Decision making - Local knowledge - Investigative skills - Observational skills - Responsibility **Personal attributes and skills** - Positive attitude to work - Sociable - Self control (pressure) - Assertive - Appearance - Courage - Honest - Impartial - Accepts advice - Alert mind - Loyal - Health	Communication Self motivation Relationship with colleagues Relationship with the public Decision making Self management	**Task skills** - Communication - Information handling - Policing **Attributes and attitudes** - Attributes relating to self - Attitudes relating to others **Cognitive skills and knowledge** - Planning - Decision making - Awareness - People skills - Law & procedures

Notes: We consulted a draft Training Needs Analysis currently being conducted by the SPC (1995). Though relevant, the categories generated by the SPC Research & Development Section - in the areas of tasks, skills, knowledge and attributes - were too numerous to be included in this table.
PABS = Police Advisory Board for Scotland.

It was not the intention of the other studies to compare and contrast competences required of police officers in different parts of the United Kingdom. However, we would argue that there

are specific competences which police officers must demonstrate if they are to function competently within Scotland. **Situational understanding**, perhaps the most crucial determinant of competence, requires officers to understand the particularly Scottish social, linguistic, legal and professional context in which they work. How localised this information should be is a matter of debate. Certainly, some of our respondents argued for the appointment of officers who understood both the culture and patois of the locality. [12] Whether, and how, a recruitment test should incorporate these criteria is an issue which needs to be considered further.

In any functional map, there is a degree of arbitrariness about the exact composition of the lists of competences. The current project set out to evaluate the SET as a screening tool in the light of changing demands made of police officers. In the functional map we have outlined these demands using what police officers themselves say that they do. This is by no means a complete map. To it, we have added other competences, which either the officers demonstrated, but did not identify, or which the data suggests is a necessary part of competent performance. We discuss these further in the following section.

8.3.1 Situational understanding

A number of our respondents described situations in which they had to:

- process information very quickly under different/dangerous circumstances
- solve problems quickly by taking decisive action
- stall or 'fish' for information upon which to base their decision

This we refer to as 'situational understanding'. In our map we emphasise information handling and decision-making. Officers must make decisions and therefore, they need the ability to process information quickly. Some of the most difficult situations, which officers described to us, appeared to be those in which changes occur rapidly, decisions need to be made quickly and information is ambiguous.

In these situations, officers appear to rely on techniques that build the information into a coherent picture (synthesise information) or stretch the amount of time available to them as problem solvers (stalling and fishing). One police officer described this process as follows:

> *When you talk to people everything starts to slot into place. You keep your wits about you, pretend you know what is going on. As you keep talking things begin to slot into place - you can sort of pigeon hole it and decide upon the approach to take.*
>
> Police Constable, Male, Case Study

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12 Recent examples from Scots literature graphically demonstrate regional differences. Compare, for example, Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* with James Kelman's *How late it was, how late* as exemplars of East and West of Scotland social and linguistic differences.

In this quotation we see how communication, awareness of conditions and people, decision-making and planning combine to produce a decision.

A number of respondents described how they approached situations which they perceived to be 'delicate'. Most officers mentioned that there is a need for an officer to be in control of a situation, or at the very least, to *appear* to be in control. In these situations, officers rely on accurate and appropriate communication. In order to achieve this, they 'fish' for clues (both verbal and non-verbal) which will help them tailor their communication to the situation. For example:

> *It's something that everybody does all the time. We've all got our own vocabularies our own languages that we use: at home, at work, on the telephone and so on. It's just adaptation. Everybody does it. We all have different vocabularies in different situations, in normal life, similar to that.*
>
> Sergeant, Male, Case Study

8.3.2 Teamwork, culture and danger

Police officers speak freely, for example, about the differences between themselves, other professional groups and some of their client groups.(We shall return to this point in Section 9). They use terminology such as 'us and them'. They stress that being part of the team is an important attribute of a police officer. The requirements of the team are often related to danger which most officers perceive to be an integral part of their job. Officers stressed the importance of courage:

> *Courage is a requirement but I don't see how you ever, ever assess whether somebody has got it or not until they are in a situation whereby they are required to exercise a degree of courage.*
>
> Police Constable, Male, Case Study

> *No, it's a degree of strength of character you have got to look for. I go in the evening to interview them in their home environment and I try always to arrive unannounced.*
>
> Sergeant, Male, Case Study

Related to the danger and the team culture is the 'banter' which characterised many of the interchanges both among serving officers and between their client groups. For example, one officer said:

> *Because there are people obviously who will say to you whatever they like you know, for whatever reason this has happened and you have done something wrong and will be a bit of a banter and it is OK but it is the people who you are maybe not friendly with, people who you may not get on with, for whatever reason, and it is them who use it against you. I don't think it's particularly a male-female thing that men will use that against women to highlight that when women do things wrong to make the men look better because the men are just as quick to criticise other men to make them look better by criticising others.*
>
> Police Constable, Female, Case Study

We suggest that 'banter' strengthens the feeling of camaraderie and teamwork which exists. Unfortunately, it can exclude those who may feel less comfortable utilising it. We shall discuss this further in Section 11.

A related finding was that officers accept that all people/officers have faults of one kind or another, and have made mistakes in the past. This capability to self-reflect plays a crucial role in the development of police officers. Officers talk of 'horses for courses'. They appear to accept that there are numerous jobs to be done, and only through team working can the best results be achieved. The implications for recruitment are obvious. This was echoed by one senior officer as:

> *I don't expect my staff to remain static ... I expect that most every week there is change in personnel for various reasons ... And development opportunities open up as people develop their own particular skills and vocational abilities which they weren't even aware existed before they joined the police. For that reason we need a lot of different backgrounds.*
>
> Senior Officer, Male, Case Study

Frequently, officers of all ranks described examples of how to manage 'up-the-way'. In our sample officers found that they sometimes had to resist pressures from above by learning how to 'manage' their supervisors. For a patrol officer this may entail providing senior officers with performance targets e.g. response time, which could be recorded, even though the individual officer thought that they were not a criterion of good performance. This gulf between why people entered the force and the reality of current work has implications for recruitment, selection and retention.

8.3.3 Common sense

In the course of our interviews and focus groups, a number of officers referred to the need to demonstrate 'common sense'. It was one of the most frequently mentioned attributes, but as a term, it is a catch all phrase which requires further exploration. However, in one focus group, respondents reflected that:

> *R1 It's a catch all job!*
>
> *R2 You need to take each individual case on its merit.*
>
> *R1 ... Though we've got legislation, a great deal of training, manuals and all this backup, a lot of things are just down to common sense. I would say about 75% of the job is common sense. You need to use common sense - that's what it is all about.*
>
> Focus Group, Case Study

Officers suggested that it might be defined as:

- *an ability to experience situations and learn from past situations, so you can build on experience, know what not to do in the future.*
- *sensible decisions, sound decisions; know that you can safely leave him alone to do the job, whereas [some have] got to be watched from pillar to post.*
- *experience of life. When they just come out of school at 16 they have no experience of life what so ever, and can hardly go and deal with domestic disputes because they have never experienced domestic disputes themselves.*

Focus Group, Case Study

It should be noted that respondents' descriptions of 'common sense' appear to approximate very closely to 'situational understanding' discussed in Section 8.3.1.

8.3.4 Discretion

All our respondents identified that police officers need to know the law (Scots) and procedures. One officer demonstrated his knowledge of case law:

> *The law of Scotland requires corroboration of every incident before you can convict...But the Moorov doctrine relates to a case at the turn of the century where a ...tailor, Mr Moorov and his seamstresses were working late and he assaulted them and raped them and eventually it was heard in court that the individual statements of each woman victim, even though they were separated in time, were so related in the nature of the offence that the separate events corroborated each other...*
>
> Police Constable, Male, Case Study

However, most also described situations in which they had exercised some degree of discretion. That is possibly due to the complex nature of the situations with which officers deal. It appears from our data that officers use the immediate demands of the job and their professional experience as criteria for deciding whether or not to take action. Even though officers were fully conversant with the Law, many mentioned examples in which they ignored it, *viz.* exercised their discretion. Some examples included: if the safety of themselves, colleagues or the public would be put at risk; a bigger (more important) 'catch' might result from their inaction; an arrest would result in too heavy a burden of paper work on a particular day. On the other hand officers sometimes feel that they have to intervene in cases where they wouldn't really want to for fear of a complaint by a member of the public. They report that it is 'safer' to bring someone in and let others decide whether or not to charge. How to recruit officers who can handle this complexity is an issue which must be addressed.

8.3.5 Stress

Many officers thought that being able to deal with stress was an important requirement of the job. Many reported stress emanating from a number of sources: restructuring leading to increasing responsibilities at lower ranks; changing shift patterns; patrol duties; increasing workloads; danger and fear of getting hurt; frustration in cases where they perceived suspected

criminals 'getting away'; failure to secure convictions; under staffing; performance targets; poor planning; and lastly, complaints from members of the public.

There was generally satisfaction with the level of pay and the security of employment, but these were off-set to some extent with fears about performance-related pay and the flattening of the organisational structure. The decline in promotional opportunities was of particular concern, especially, when related to the number of graduates recently recruited to the service.

Focus group respondents alluded to the 'culture shock' experienced by new recruits. This would imply that personal career expectations need to be matched more closely to opportunities offered by police work. Most respondents expressed ambivalent views about graduates. Some recognised that their skills may be required for particular services e.g. statistical analysis, but most felt that a degree was of no particular advantage in policing. We return to this issue in our discussion of a 'recruitment pathway' in Section 10. We wonder whether the real issue is not graduates *versus* non-graduates, but rather that we are witnessing, as with many other occupational groups, a trade in transition to a profession? During such paradigmatic shifts, a mismatch often occurs between job demands, recruitment practices and attitudes of existing employees.

8.3.6 Change, attitudes and flexibility

Functional mapping provides useful information about competences currently demonstrated by police officers. However, we must also highlight areas in the data which hint at the direction of future changes. Of particular importance is officers' attitudes to change in the light of the dramatic changes occurring in both police work and society. We provide both positive and negative examples here.

Firstly, from our behavioural event interviews, it emerged that police officers must deal fairly with people, many of whom are very different from themselves in both the ways they behave and the values they hold. This, we suggest, is crucial to good policing. Yet in our case studies, we heard police officers refer to members of the public in derogatory and stereotypical ways. One Police Constable reported that:

> *The 'tinks' are a very close knit community, very hard to penetrate and totally devious and dishonest in dealing with the police. Natural born pullers of ranks and you cannot take anything they say at face value.*
>
> Police Constable, Male, Case Study

As Scotland becomes an increasingly multi-racial society, then effective selection processes must select out, as far as is possible, those who are likely to hold extreme or stereotypical views. The problem is whether the SET, or any test, can perform this function without itself giving offence.

Secondly, officers described working collaboratively with other professionals. These included: procurators fiscal, doctors, social workers and teachers. One area, in particular, the interviewing of children or women in cases of suspected abuse required sensitive co-operation between members of different professions. In one case study, we were shown the facilities in which such interviews took place. The data suggest that the nature of policing is moving towards greater, rather than less, inter-agency co-operation during which the attitudes of all professionals begin to change. But this transition to being co-operative colleagues is by no means problem-free. This was echoed by officers in one focus group :

> *I had a meeting with doctors in X [small town] and I was absolutely amazed, they seemed to be telling me what they expected my officers to do while they were there to assist the doctors. You are there to assist the injured, that is as far as I am concerned. But they have this attitude whereby they seem to be able to think they could dictate what the officers did and to a certain extent they were getting away with it with younger officers ... I see that in here [police station] to a certain extent by a particular doctor. But the doctor is here at your request [as a police surgeon] not the other way around.*
>
> Senior Officer, Male, Focus Group

These same officers claimed to be able to identify members of certain professions:

> *Teachers seem to be a bit of a problem. I don't know if it is the university or what, but when you are dealing with them in the traffic, they always question what you are doing, they always ask you 'why' you had to stop them, and why you are asking me this...*
>
> Police Officer, Male, Focus Group

Other officers reflected on their relationships with social workers:

> *There are some difficulties that are from the different services – two different purposes. I believe they [social workers] are terribly naive. That is in the language they use – e.g. if you have a conversation we might talk about "the wee guy – the kid" and they say "the client". The language reveals the different perspective underneath. Social workers adopt a different perspective.*
>
> Sergeant, Male, Case Study

Another officer recalled an incident which he attended on a housing scheme as:

> *Well I did not have the social workers with me – didn't want the social workers with me – they would have got completely in the way. The social work department are looked upon in the community as just a bunch of ... absolute gullible fools. Sheep to be fleeced.*
>
> Police Constable, Male, Case Study

Officers, able to respond to these changes in working practices, should demonstrate flexible attitudes towards collaboration and also higher level generic transferable skills. Therefore, the recruitment and selection process must identify candidates with the potential to meet not just existing but also the future requirements of the service.

8.4 Conclusion

The competences involved in police work can be described in a functional map which includes:

Task skills

- Communication
- Information handling
- Policing

Attributes and attitudes

- Relating to self
- Relating to others

Knowledge and cognitive skills

- Planning
- Decision-making
- Awareness
- People skills
- Scots Law and procedures

Overlapping the map we have found that a number of other areas are also relevant:

Situational Understanding

- Synthesising information
- Stalling and fishing
- Solving problems
- Making decisions under difficult situations

Teamwork

- Culture and danger
- Managing superiors

Common sense

A group of personal attributes and problem-solving skills relating to a variety of factors, including:

- Ability to learn from experience
- Independence
- Firmness of approach and methods

Discretion

- Application of Scots law and procedures
- Organisational changes

Stress

- Danger of the job, or fear of getting hurt
- Shift work patterns
- Criminals getting away

- Criminals not being convicted
- Under staffing, or over worked
- Unrealistic performance targets
- Poor planning
- Complaints; and lastly
- Culture shock experienced by officers during probation

Managing Change

- Generic transferable skills
- Flexible attitudes

In Section 9 we consider equal opportunities - a necessary element of a fair recruitment and selection process.

9. Equal Opportunities: Women and ethnic minorities

9.1 Background

The police service, like every other organisation in the UK, must comply with the terms of existing equal opportunities and racial discrimination legislation. Individual forces have developed their own policies and procedures to meet these legislative requirements. Additionally, Scottish Office Guidelines (Scottish Office, 1992) and a HMIC report (HMIC, 1993) have addressed issues of equality. HMIC (1992) reflects that:

> *The service has a proud tradition and reputation for serving its communities from within rather than as an external force.*

All have raised the police's awareness of equality of opportunity, therefore, recruitment and selection procedures for the police should be placed within this context.

In Phase 1 of this research, we sought to identify groups which may inadvertently be disadvantaged by the current SET. An analysis of extant recruitment and selection statistics provided us with sufficient data on female candidates. The differences between male and female candidates' performances on the SET were reported earlier (Section 7). However, because the number of candidates in our sample from ethnic minority backgrounds is not amenable to statistical analysis, we were unable to comment on their performance in the SET.

Throughout this project, we focused on two aspects of equal opportunity: gender and race. Social class, religion, marital status, responsibility for dependants, disability and sexual orientation were not explored as variables. It should be noted here that a higher proportion of

women failed the visual acuity step in the recruitment pathway of one force and the reasons for this need further exploration.

The work of Phase 2 was undertaken primarily through two case studies. We gained further insights into issues of equality and ethnicity: not only through the events which officers described but also the language they used. These findings we present in this section. To complement these, equal opportunities monitoring statistics from one of our case study forces were analysed, and a visit made to a Community Relations Council.

Significantly, equality refers not only to candidates and employees, but also to members of the public. This important aspect was stressed by the Commission for Racial Equality :

> *... to ensure that no members of the public receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, or national or ethnic origins, or are disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable.*
>
> (CRE, 1993)

We now discuss ways in which the data from Phase 2 articulate with the findings from the first phase.

The term minority ethnic group is generally used with reference to people from: the New Commonwealth and Pakistan; Chinese, principally from Hong Kong; Africans; West Indians; and the descendants of these groups who were born in Britain (Scottish Office, 1994). Sometimes the inclusive term Black is used to describe all people who do not belong to the majority ethnic population, *viz.* White. Scotland has proportionately fewer people from ethnic minorities than elsewhere in Britain. The ethnic minority population for Britain as a whole is about 5.5%, whereas ethnic minority groups compose only 1.3% of the total Scottish population. Strathclyde Region has the highest concentration of people from ethnic minorities, currently 1.5%. In Scotland, although the majority of people from ethnic minorities live in Strathclyde (56%), people from ethnic minorities now live in all parts of the country (Scottish Office, 1994).

9.2 The SET

In our original sample (see Section 7), we were able to identify only twelve candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds. To provide more illuminative evidence, in Phase 2 we chose one division with an extremely high proportion of ethnic minority people. Our informants in one force estimated that in two areas members of ethnic minorities comprised the majority of the population. That force was particularly aware of the desirability to reflect the composition of the community which it serves. It had established policies to address the identified under-representation in the force; targets to double the number of officers from ethnic minorities

within five years and assisted in the design of an access course in conjunction with a local college of further education.

In order to encourage recruitment from ethnic minority groups, one senior officer reported that:

> *What I try to do day in day out is encourage recruitment and I integrate quite a lot with the ethnic minority community; both at youth and adult levels. We get lots of articles in Scottish Asian Voice and the Friday People Press urging people to come and join.*
>
> Senior Officer, Male, Case Study

Another officer described his role as:

> *So, it was felt, the fact is that one dedicated officer should be placed so as to make contact with local groups, local community leaders, mosques, synagogues and along those lines and it has then gone on since that point, but really my major function, apart from liaising with the groups is to deal with all racial incidents ...*
>
> Police Constable, Male, Case Study

To further equal opportunities, all forces have been advised by HMIC to monitor the ethnic backgrounds of candidates (HMIC, 1993). One force, Case Study 1, provided us with recruitment monitoring statistics for three consecutive years, 1992-1994.[13] These, we have analysed by the sex and ethnicity of candidates and identified 'hurdles' in the recruitment pathway at which candidates dropped out of the process. The details of these statistics are given in Appendix 14.

The combined returns for three years' recruitment in Case Study 1 generated information on 17,513 applicants. Of those, 0.9% and 0.3% were ethnic minority male and female candidates respectively. The breakdown for the total sample was 77% male and 23% female candidates. Women are, therefore, under-represented compared with their proportion in the population as a whole. Significantly, we found that women and people from ethnic minorities are proportionally more likely to fail the SET which confirms the findings from our survey (Section 7).

Of all candidates *who failed the SET*, 55% were male and 45% female. With respect to ethnic minority candidates, 3% *of those who failed* were male and 0.8% were female. If we compare the proportion of groups who failed the SET with their distribution in the total number of applicants, it is clear that women and ethnic minority candidates are proportionally over-represented amongst those who failed. Approximately three times as many ethnic minority

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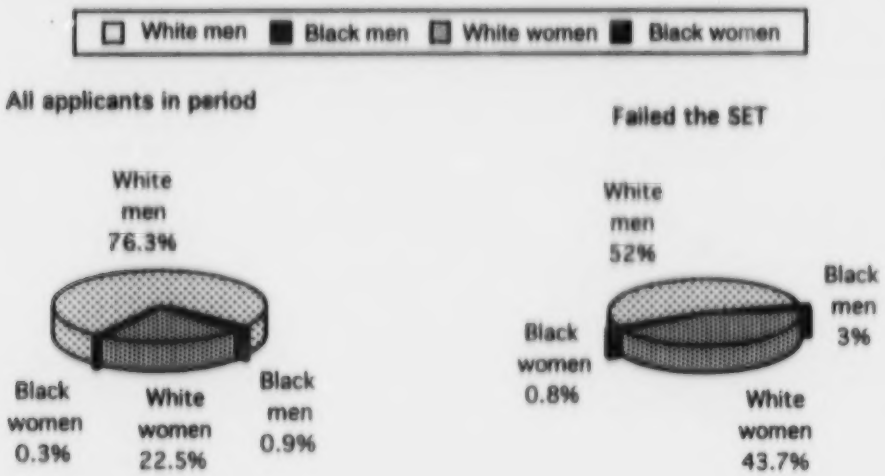
[13] It should be noted that information for the three years does vary because the monitoring form was amended during this period. To overcome this problem, data for the three years was combined into one data set.

candidates failed the SET as would be expected from their representation in the total number of applicants. These findings are summarised in Table 9 and illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Proportion of candidates in one force over the period 1992-94



The data on which Figure 4 is based are presented in tabular format in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Candidates failing the SET as proportion of all candidates who failed in one force over the period 1992-94

	all males		black males		all females		black females		total
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	
Applicants in period	77.2	13,524	0.9	165	22.8	3,989	0.3	49	17,513
Failed: SET	55.0	1,186	3.0	64	44.5	959	0.8	18	2,145

Note: Not all candidates sat the SET. The full data set is presented in Appendix 14

In a later Section (Section 10), we present in more detail a 'recruitment pathway' composed of discrete 'hurdles' which candidates must overcome. In this context, the SET is a necessary but not sufficient selection criterion. However, evidence would suggest that some candidates experience more difficulties than others with this particular part of the process. An examination of the data demonstrates that 39% of all ethnic minority male applicants failed the SET compared with only 9% of all male applicants. For women the trend is similar, with approximately three times as many ethnic minority females failing the test compared with their proportion in the total sample. Approximately 37% of all ethnic minority female applicants

failed compared with 24% of all female applicants failing the SET. This statistical analysis is supported by case study evidence. One senior officer recalled:

> *One specific example, we have a special constable, not a police officer, a special constable, a young lady from the Muslim/Pakistani community who has tried her hardest to pass the Police Entrance Exam. She has gone to the College [named local college of further education] and she has failed and I and all the police constables that she works with would have her any day as a police officer. That is one example ... It is the arithmetic side that was the problem and written English slightly a problem.*
>
> Senior Officer, Male, Case Study

However, when we consider 'home visits', another step in the recruitment pathway, then the proportions are reversed. More white male candidates fail that part of the selection process.

9.3 Attitudes

A number of the behavioural events, which officers discussed with us during Phase 2, provided insights into how the police cope with differences. Clearly, police officers deal with a wide range of people, many of whom hold disparate values and beliefs, and behave and communicate in different ways. Our respondents talked about policing areas which they perceived to be different or difficult. These included: areas with a high proportion of ethnic minority people; peripheral housing schemes; travelling people and inner city areas. All demonstrated police attitudes towards difference and how this is expressed in both language and behaviour.

> *Most officers come from a working class background like ourselves. It comes as a surprise to a lot of people. The living conditions ... and values they espouse. In this division in particular we have a large Asian community. This obviously creates a difference of values ... they have their own values and codes.*
>
> Sergeant, Female, Case Study

A number of respondents focused on the centrality of communication to policing, but also described ways in which communications both within and across different groups may vary. An Ethnic Liaison Officer reported that he was learning, but was not yet fluent, in Urdu. Perhaps, more importantly, he identified that he required an understanding of other cultures.

> *I think understanding, patience especially working with the Asian community because everything goes along very slowly. I think just the will to work with another race of people to be quite honest ... the great phrase of being politically correct is banded about a lot and I now feel that I watch what I say. Obviously I do not shake the hand of an elderly Asian woman because it is just not on ... I do not get annoyed when an Asian woman will not open the door to me and talks to me through it, for a lot of police crack up at that. They feel it is the height of bad manners, but the fact is that if it is part of your culture which says if you are going to speak to a man, let alone a white man, ... it is just not done.*
>
> Police Constable, Male, Case Study

Some officers thought that the police service as a whole could do more to extend cultural understanding within the larger community. For example, one officer recalled an incident in which residents complained about fire-works being ignited during an ethnic minority festival.

The white population was unaware of the significance of the celebration and this led to misunderstandings. Focus group members suggested that the police undertake a more proactive education and liaison role. *Inter alia*, this would raise the profile of the police with ethnic minorities and hopefully, lead to an increase in the numbers recruited into the force.

Most of our respondents talked openly about the need to recruit more candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds. In one case study, officers thought that officers who come from ethnic minority backgrounds were able to communicate more effectively with others from similar backgrounds. Additionally, they act as role models for other candidates. Perhaps, of equal importance, it was argued that the presence of more officers from ethnic minorities would improve understanding, and acceptance, of cultural differences amongst fellow officers.

Respondents discussed the current low number of officers from ethnic minority backgrounds. Most felt that this was a consequence of how the police were perceived in the ethnic community.

> *I think a lot of it has to do with the perception of the elderly Asian community. I think that any young Asian has to have permission to do virtually anything and they would certainly need permission to join the police from either their father or their grandfather, whoever is in the extended family and I think they believe that a career in the police is possibly not for an Asian person. Probably certainly not for an Asian girl.*
>
> Police Constable, Male, Case Study

On numerous occasions, other respondents repeated this reason: that insufficient numbers of candidates come from the ethnic minority community because of the poor image of police work emanating primarily from the Indian sub-continent. Clearly, the veracity of this view should be established, but was beyond the scope of this current project. However, we are able to report some evidence from discussions with a Community Relations Council.

Our community informants stressed the complexity of policing a multi-racial society and suggested that a number of factors contribute to the low number of applicants to the police. These include:

- Asian parents have high expectations of their children, preferring them to enter the more traditional professions of medicine and law
- The more negative perceptions of the police held by the older generation persists
- Police work is perceived, as in their country of origin, to be poorly paid and low status
- Racial incidents, which the police may sometimes handle inappropriately, reinforce the perception that the police are racist
- The media sometimes portray the police in a poor light

This account by the ethnic minority representatives, while more complex, does support police perceptions that image affects recruitment. The problem is twin fold: insufficient candidates

from ethnic minority backgrounds apply; and more of them fail the SET in its current form. Both of these issues need to be addressed if the number of officers from ethnic minorities is to rise. However, there is evidence that forces are aware of these issues. Both case studies have equal opportunities policies but there may be a gulf between policy and practice. In one force, the number of women recruited has risen dramatically, and it is only a matter of time before younger women work their way through the police; hence altering the dominant image of the police. Additionally, the force in Case Study 1 co-operates with a local college of further education to provide an access course. This is the only force in Scotland to do so, and its experiences are predictors of what is likely to be the racial composition of a number of Scottish cities in the future. Half of the students on the course were from ethnic minority backgrounds. The course teaches a number of general skills, including English and Maths, in preparation for the SET. Unfortunately, recent results have been disappointing.

One area of the recruitment pathway raised concerns. Home visits for background enquiries are potentially problematic. Unregulated, they provide opportunities in which differences may be perceived by visiting officers and judgements formed which may adversely affect some candidates. We understand that a number of police forces are now addressing this issue by developing performance criteria for home visits. However, there is no evidence in the available data to suggest that ethnic minority candidates are being discriminated against as a consequence of home visits. In fact, a disproportionate number of white male candidates fail that particular hurdle. This may be a reflection of labour market forces in which large numbers of unemployed, and not necessarily appropriately skilled, white males perceive the police as a career option.

In summary we conclude that:

- **forces have identified the need to recruit currently under-represented groups**
- **only one force has developed an access course to attract under-represented groups**
- **proportionally more women and ethnic minority candidates experience difficulties with the SET**
- **proportionally more white male candidates are eliminated following 'background enquiry' and for 'other reasons' than other groups.**
- **the police may not be viewed as an attractive career option by the ethnic minority community**
- **the police has a poor image with ethnic minority groups, largely for reasons outwith the influence of the police although sometimes reinforced by both the media and also police officers' conduct**

- **there is no evidence to suggest that 'home visits' are used to eliminate proportionally more members of ethnic minorities from the recruitment process**
- **both the insufficient number of applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds and their disproportionately higher failure rate on the SET need to be addressed**

We now move on to place the SET in the context of a recruitment pathway.

10. Recruitment Pathway

The path from civilian to regular police officer varies greatly across the forces. We were able to identify three distinct phases:

- Recruitment up to and including formal applications
- Selection including the SET
- Initial training both within the Scottish Police College and at force level

Each is composed of a number of discrete steps, each of which should seek evidence of candidates' abilities against established criteria. No unnecessary steps should be included. Our evidence suggests there is a need to clarify the function of each step in the whole process.

10.1 Recruitment

The Police service operates under national legislative provision but with eight independent forces. There are few nationally prescribed standards for recruitment, for example, ages limits (SHHD, Regulation 6), and recruits must satisfy individual chief constables of their suitability. Accordingly, one would expect some variations in practices to emerge: some of these we have identified. As an example, we include an analysis of recruitment pathways in four forces (see Appendix 7). This illustrates that basic entry requirements, as listed in Appendix 8, are interpreted slightly differently across the forces. Some required candidates to demonstrate a certain level of personal maturity which *de facto* increased the average age of recruits. Other forces have introduced specific preconditions for entry, for example, a full driving licence, although this is not part of the national basic entrance requirements. Some of these preconditions may have the effect of discriminating against certain groups of candidates and we suggest that this should be carefully monitored in future.

Alternatively, it may be argued that at a time when the number of applicants to join the police far exceeds vacancies, then each step in the pathway must reduce the total number of applicants. Our respondents commented on the cost of recruitment and selection procedures.

Some felt that it would not be unreasonable to seek evidence of a commitment to a career in the police force. For example, one or more of the following: a recognised first aid certificate; driving licence; life saving certificate or Duke of Edinburgh award. The function of these could be incorporated in promotional literature, and candidates would be apprised of their status, *viz.* skills which will not necessarily guarantee entry but will enhance their chances. Currently, a number of successful recruits are unable to swim, and we question whether the Scottish Police College should undertake this level of work.

10.2 Selection including the SET

The SET is part of a series of activities designed to select candidates who, with further training, will make good police officers. Its position in the pathway and the relative weight accorded to it varies across the forces. Some forces have introduced numerous steps in the first phase of the selection process, thus reducing the number of candidates who sit the SET. As prior selection methods become increasingly more widespread and effective, then the role and function of the SET will inevitably change.

Evidence from the eight forces, demonstrates the disparate ways in which the SET is perceived. Most thought that its primary function was to screen out candidates who do not have the necessary mental ability to carry out police work. One suggested that:

> *This is the primary function of the SET and if it achieves this alone, it will have proved its value.*
>
> Senior Officer, Male, Delphi Consultation

Others questioned the assumptions that the SET is able to: screen out candidates who do not have the ability to carry out police work; select people who would benefit from training and reduce the number of applicants to manageable numbers. These are not necessarily compatible aims. Additionally, one respondent hoped that:

> *the SET offers non-qualified applicants, that is those with no academic qualifications, the opportunity to show their academic standard is good enough.*
>
> Senior Officer, Male, Delphi Consultation

However, most identified that the SET was an academic examination and as such was not related to police work. This view was echoed by one respondent:

> *I'm unhappy with this question [on Delphi Questionnaire] Some may have the 'mental ability' to sort out a fight but not to complete the paperwork.*
>
> Senior Officer, Male, Delphi Consultation

There is increasing evidence that the face validity of the SET has declined over time. Most of our respondents, *viz.* police officers with over ten years service, had no personal experiences of the current test. Some, rather honestly, recalled how they were 'helped' to pass an earlier

version of the test by invigilating officers. Many of our respondents saw no correlation between applicants who passed the SET and those who possessed the attributes to develop into a good police officer. One officer, expressed the view that:

> *I do know enough to know what I am getting in and I do know enough from interviewing potential recruits who have passed their Police Entrance, the standard police test, to know that from those selected on the basis of having passed that test and other enquiries for final interview, some of them are hopeless cases and should never have got as far as they did.*
>
> Senior Officer, Male, Case Study

Another identified the importance of being able to:

> *... relate to different persons in society in the manner that they understand. You've maybe got to do it a different way, you have got to be able to, if you want information from someone you have got to be able to speak to your subject ... If you walk into a house belonging to Lady so and so you are speaking to her in a totally different manner to the way you are speaking to a breach of the peace in one of the housing schemes where everybody's ranting and raving and threatening.*

and thought that this was more of a problem for educated people, *viz.* those more likely to pass the current test:

> *... This [being able to talk to different people] is where not all but some of the graduates and more well educated people can struggle.*
>
> Officers, Male, Focus Group

The amount of resources which officers perceive to be devoted to selection was also highlighted:

> *We have got an enormous human resources [department] which has sprung out of nowhere, which is getting bigger. It is like a balloon its got all these people.*
>
> Officers, Male, Focus Group

Clearly, some forces have already recognised these problems and tailored the pathway to suit their own particular circumstances. Others report experimenting with assessment centre-type activities. Longitudinal evidence from American Telephone and Telegraph Company indicates the predictive value of assessment centres. Over a thirty year period, research shows that candidates selected from assessment centres are more likely to be promoted than those entering by other routes.[14] The reasons for this are not self-evident. Future success may be a result of relationships established between candidates and assessors during assessment centres, which lead to mentoring, rather than the predictive value of the centres *per se*. Opinions regarding their utility for police selection are also mixed. One officer recalled:

> *In assessment centres for recruits recently, you'll find graduates and educated applicants' verbal communication is very good, but their written ability is an embarrassment and I don't know whether it's because they sit with a PC [personal computer] all the time and have got spell checks. They can't write letters, their problem-solving ability is questionable in a lot of cases, whereby the opposite is*

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14 See, for example, Bray D W & Howard A (1983).

evident from people with a lesser education. Their oral communication is not always up to scratch but their written work is better and I don't know why it is but I've been amazed by some graduates [inability] *to put pen to paper.*

Inspector, Male, Focus Group

Available evidence would suggest that assessment centres are particularly useful in identifying interpersonal skills, such as leadership. However, our own evidence indicates that centres may be unacceptable to police forces in Scotland. Firstly, well-designed activities require resources which may be beyond what can be expected of a small force. Secondly, they are often biased in favour of interpersonal skills which may not be good predictors of ability to undertake police work.

Psychometric testing is often associated with assessment centres. There are numerous personality tests[15] which could be incorporated into a selection process. We are reluctant to propose this option because: trained testers would be required, thus increasing the costs of its administration, and also our evidence indicates that there is little support amongst the police for the introduction of such tests.

Another respondent questioned the sequencing of the SET in the recruitment process. He suggested that it should operate as a 'backstop' at the end of the selection process, and even then exceptional candidates who fail it should still be recruited.

10.3 Training

Training is the final stage in the transformation of a civilian recruit into a functioning police officer. All phases of training, including initial and post-basic training both at the Scottish Police College and within each force, build upon the skills and qualities identified during the selection process. An example of the structure of the probationary period is displayed in Appendix 17. If the qualities required to complete the training have not been appropriately identified during the recruitment and selection stages, then costly mistakes will be manifest. Attrition rates during the training period would be one indicator of a mismatch between candidates and job requirements. We are informed that drop-out rates are low and few recruits are asked to leave the service. There are numerous factors which can affect attrition rates: we would suggest that one is the length of the selection process. This process, up to eighteen months in some forces, allows candidates to develop a firm concept of a career in the police, and this may, in part, explain the low wastage rates. Additionally, we understand that providing support to probationers is a time-consuming activity. These two factors will influence attrition rates. However, there are additional costs. We do not know the number of suitable candidates who are rejected because they fail the test or the amount of time forces give

[15] The 16PF is one of the most commonly applied personality tests for recruitment purposes. A computerised version is available which would reduce the number of staff hours required to process the results.

to supporting probationers who have passed the SET but experience difficulties during training. Both of these have cost and quality implications for the organisation.

10.4 Common path

Our initial exploration indicates that although forces use similar steps in the recruitment process, the exact sequence of activities does vary (see Appendix 7). There are, however, also significant differences. For example, some carry out preliminary 'sifting' before the issue of application forms; others include assessment centre-type activities which allow candidates to interact with each other in the presence of assessors.

Despite these differences, our findings from Phase 2 indicate little support for exceptional admission to the police. It would appear that the concept of a national test which all candidates must sit, is still one to which many police officers subscribe. Forces reported that:

> *all candidates should be the subject of the same stages*
>
> *equality of opportunity is important*
>
> *one of the great strengths of the recruiting and selection process is that it applies the same standards to everyone. This would be lost if exceptions were common-place*
>
> Participants, Delphi Consultation

As more and disparate steps are added to the process, then the original function of the SET is changed and comparability is compromised. Additionally, it is not possible to compare the cost-effectiveness of administering the SET as forces apply it in different ways.

To summarise, we found that:

- **each force has developed a slightly different recruitment pathway which affects the role and function of the SET**
- **some forces have extended the range of entrance requirements**
- **despite these local variations, many officers hold fast to the concept of a standard test**
- **diverse opinions were expressed about the appropriateness of assessment centres**
- **among respondents concerns were expressed at the amount of resources currently devoted to recruitment and selection, although actual costs were not identified**

11. Conclusions and implications

In this report, we have presented our findings in respect of both phases of the research: a statistical analysis and an in-depth study of two case studies. Additionally, we validated emerging issues by circulating them to all eight forces, Delphi-style. In this section we highlight the main findings and indicate the implications for recruitment and selection to the police. These, we formulate as recommendations which would need to be considered by both the Service and the Department.

11.1 The SET as an instrument

As we have seen, our respondents generally indicated support for a revision of the Police Standard Entrance Test (SET). The average age of recruits; their length of time away from school; the changes in teaching and learning styles; the differences between formal mathematical knowledge and that practised in everyday life; and the lack of provision to use a calculator, all of these factors affected the validity and reliability of the current test.

- **a revision of the SET is recommended to ensure that it reflects recent changes in both education and society**
- **evaluation should be built into the framework of the revised SET**

Sections 2 and 3 of the SET are particularly problematic. Each generated disparate distribution curves, demonstrating lower scores for female candidates, and lower pass rates for women and members of ethnic minority groups. These two groups have been disadvantaged by the current SET. Arguably, this has resulted in the failure to select candidates who possessed other qualities which would have enabled them to develop into good police officers.

- **the SET should be revised and piloted on a representative sample of the population to ensure that no one group is disadvantaged**
- **the principle of cultural fairness should underpin the proposed revision**

In addition, we also display areas of police work in our functional map, which could be tested in the SET, but which are currently absent. Numerous respondents stressed the importance of writing clear, concise English. Officers must compile evidence and complete documentation accurately. The current SET contains no assessment of a candidate's ability to write continuous English prose. In addition, the numeracy section does not articulate with the type of number work which police officers must demonstrate. These two factors have contributed to the low face validity of the SET.

- **the SET should be revised to ensure that it measures abilities and knowledge relevant to current police work**

The extent to which the selection procedure identifies candidates' knowledge of local situations needs to be addressed. Many respondents stressed the importance of detailed local knowledge, for example, of particular urban environments or local patois. We recognise both the contribution these factors make to competent performance, and also the necessity to deploy staff flexibly. However, we suggest that local knowledge should be explored in interviews rather than in a SET.

In our statistical analysis, we identified a relationship between the educational attainment levels of candidates and scores on the SET. This has implications for future selection procedures. We would argue that it might be more efficient to utilise prior educational attainment as one stream of entry to the police. We recognise that this is particularly contentious, as most of our respondents felt that graduate recruits, were not necessarily better than non-graduates. However, taking cognisance of the correlation between educational attainment and passing the SET, and also the need to contain the costs of selection, we argue that consideration should be given to utilising prior education and learning and experience for entry to the police. We anticipate that considerable savings could be made in the administration of the selection process if fewer candidates were presented for the SET.

- **accreditation of prior education and learning and previous educational qualifications should be considered as alternative routes into the police**

11.2 Recruitment

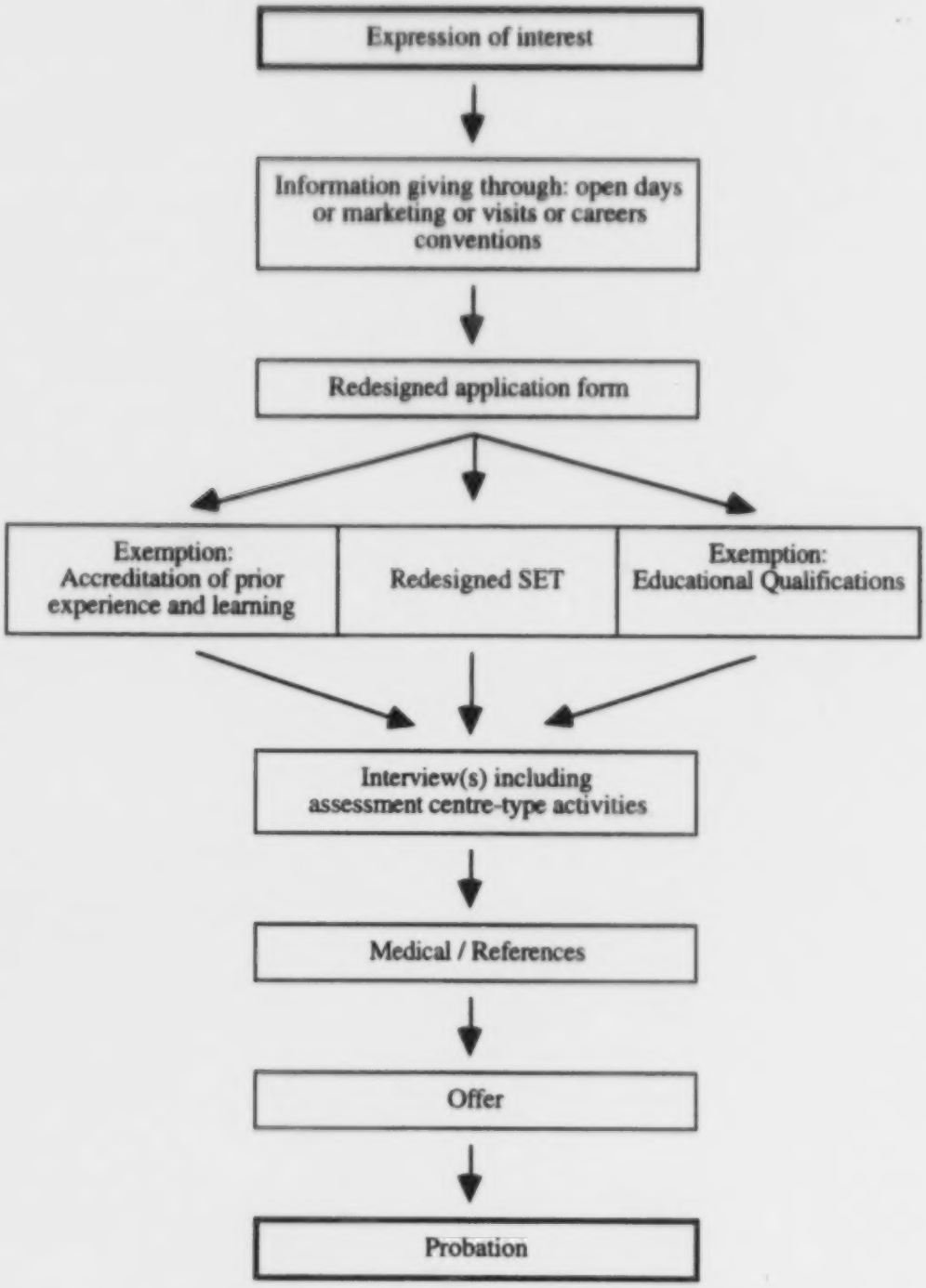
We suggest that the SET should be placed in the context of a recruitment pathway as demonstrated in Section 10. We also note the existing variations across forces in the way each has developed its own pathway and incorporated the SET into it. These have implications for the role and function of the SET. We also suggest that the importance of the SET in the pathway should be reduced because it is unlikely that higher level competences can be identified in a short paper and pencil test.

- **the SET should be placed in the context of a recruitment pathway**
- **its relative importance should be reduced**

Although we recognise the importance of local knowledge (stressed by all our respondents), we suggest that consideration should be given to developing a uniform pathway for the eight forces. This should be based upon best practices, and may, for example, include a redesigned application form which identifies evidence of past experiences relevant to police work. It should increase cost-effectiveness and also ensure that legislative requirements are adhered to uniformly.

- **the police service should agree a standardised recruitment process based upon best practices (see, for example, Figure 5) but also reflect both the disparate size of forces and the number of applicants**

Figure 5: Proposed revised recruitment pathway


Expression of interest
Information giving through: open days or marketing or visits or careers conventions
Redesigned application form
Exemption: Accreditation of prior experience and learning
Redesigned SET
Exemption: Educational Qualifications
Interview(s) including assessment centre-type activities
Medical / References
Offer
Probation

Our evidence indicated that the SET currently performs multifarious functions: *inter alia* selecting candidates with the necessary academic ability to undertake police work; identifying those who will benefit from training; and reducing the number of candidates. We suggest that these are more than one test can effectively perform. To improve the selection process, the functions of the SET should be disaggregated and redistributed to other steps in the recruitment pathway (see Figure 5). For example, extended methods of providing information through open days, marketing or careers conventions, as first steps in the pathway, would serve both to provide information to candidates and also reduce the total number of candidates.

- **the functions of the SET should be redefined and disaggregated; some functions could be more effectively undertaken in other steps of the recruitment pathway**

The SET is a norm-referenced test - thus candidates' performances are rated against scores developed during the piloting of the original test. However, our evidence indicated that each force sets its own pass mark according to the supply of, and demand for, candidates. The current range of pass marks is between 50 and 60%. Therefore, a candidate who narrowly fails in one area, may apply to a neighbouring force which operates with a lower pass mark. This, we consider, to be unacceptable as it negates the concept of national standards for entry to the police. We suggest that criterion-referenced testing should be developed. This would entail identifying the required competences for police work and ensuring that items on the test elicit evidence of candidates ability to achieve these specified outcomes. This would increase the face validity of the SET and should reduce the reliance which individual forces have made on localised variations in the recruitment pathway.

- **a criterion-referenced test should be developed based upon agreed skills and knowledge required for police work**

Our functional map indicates that a wide range of skills, knowledge and abilities is required of competent police officers. Clearly, not all of these are amenable to testing in a paper and pencil test. Some, for example written communication, information handling and planning and decision-making, could be tested in a redesigned SET. Items, such as 'in-tray exercises'[16] would help contextualise candidates' knowledge and identify their ability to solve problems.

Some respondents voiced reservations about various aspects of the recruitment process: home visits, in particular, were considered problematic. However, we know that certain competences

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16 Candidates are given copies of documents with which they would be expected to work if appointed to the job. They are asked to make decisions using the documents, viz. the in-tray, thus demonstrating their problem-solving and decision-making abilities.

are best identified interactively. For example, oral communication skills, personal presentation and strength of commitment to the concept of a career in the force, all need to be explored; as does honesty and reliability. We suggest a competence-based selection process should be designed to ensure that each stage of the recruitment pathway generates relevant and adequate evidence against specified competences.

On the basis of this evidence, and taking cognisance of the available resources, we cannot recommend that individual forces develop assessment centres. A cost-effective alternative may be to develop a national set of assessment centre-type activities which individual forces could utilise. We are not proposing that fully comprehensive assessment centres should be employed for initiate recruitment, but a recruitment manual continuing inter-active activities could be designed. The ACPOS Training Committee could take a lead role with individual forces 'buying into' the service. We therefore suggest that:

- **the police service should examine ways of developing a set of national assessment centre-type activities, for example by ACPOS Training Committee, to which individual forces could 'buy in'**

11.3 Recruitment and selection process

We have referred throughout this report to cost-effectiveness. This is an important factor which must underpin any recruitment and selection process. Does the current pathway effectively and efficiently recruit candidates who demonstrate the necessary abilities for police work? Several informants reported a mismatch between their current job and their reasons for joining the service. This may, in part, reflect how jobs have developed, but we suggest that a better match should be sought between candidates' expectations and the reality of police work. More specific marketing, recruitment and educational materials should be developed. Their purpose would be twin-fold: to raise the general public's awareness of police work and also to help potential candidates develop a more-informed concept of a career in the police.

Additionally, more demanding evidence of commitment to a career in the police should be sought. It would not appear unreasonable to ask candidates to demonstrate their abilities, in such areas as first aid, swimming, driving or community service. The police require a ready supply of good candidates. This does not necessarily imply moving to a graduate profession, as has been proposed in some other countries. We argue that part of the definition of being a 'good candidate' is being able to demonstrate the strength of commitment to a career in the police.

- **forces should actively market themselves in order to increase informed self-selection of candidates**

- **optional pre-entry requirements should be established and publicised ensuring that potential candidates know these will be used as indicators of commitment**

11.4 Equal opportunities

There is clear evidence that police forces are aware of equal opportunities for both employees and the community. However, most recognise that their composition does not accurately reflect the communities which they serve. In this context it is essential that the Standard Entrance Test (SET) is fair and does not inadvertently disadvantage certain groups in society. From our statistical analysis, there is sufficient evidence to show that the current SET is not a fair instrument. A higher proportion of women and people from ethnic minorities groups, score proportionately lower than do white male candidates.

Bias can enter tests at several levels. These include: content; language; test atmosphere; predictive value and inappropriate use. How test scores are utilised and interpreted are an important aspect of bias. Women and members of ethnic minority groups appear to perform less well on the SET. However, we have no evidence that these groups go on to become less effective police officers.

If the police wish to increase the representation of these groups, then the SET must be redesigned. However, this in itself will not immediately lead to more women or members of ethnic minorities being appointed to the police. To redress the unfairness of the test overall, consideration should be given to developing a number of alternative routes into the police. For example, accreditation based upon evidence of exceptional performance in previous employment and/or prior educational qualifications could be developed. Portfolios of evidence should not be perceived as 'an easy route' and care should be taken to ensure 'parity of esteem'. These routes would be open equally to all candidates, but would probably be the quickest way of increasing the number of candidates from under-represented groups.

- **the police forces should consider developing differentiated routes into the force and reducing the reliance upon the SET**

11.5 A national service

Recruitment and selection procedures require resources. Most organisations seek a balance between costs and perceived effectiveness of the process. All steps in the process, including tests, must be based upon the competences currently required in the job. Additionally, the police must select a range of candidates including: those who will be content to remain unpromoted police constables (an increasing proportion), and those with the ability to develop further as organisational needs change. Given the complexity of the task and the resources

required, we suggest that consideration should be given to centralising some parts of the process. Development of testing and assessment centre-type activities are examples of steps which lend themselves to centralised development.

- **the development of the recruitment and selection process should be disaggregated with some services developed by a central body to which individual forces contribute, for example ACPOS Training Committee**

Finally,

> *If police forces are to continue to service these complex demands and manage change successfully it is vitally important that the current high quality standard of recruit is maintained and that the training available to all police officers and civilian staff is appropriate to job roles and responsibilities and delivered at the right time for development.*
>
> (HMIC, 1995)

To achieve, this we suggest that:

- **the police require a supply of quality recruits who demonstrate higher level transferable skills**
- **effective recruitment and selection require resources which should be deployed in the most cost-effective way to ensure that appropriate candidates are selected**
- **the SET requires urgent revision**
- **the length of the current recruitment process could be reduced in the light of our other recommendations**
- **the number of steps in the current recruitment pathway and the sequencing of each should be standardised**

Appendix 1: Preliminary interview schedule

1. Competences

We are interested in identifying the competences now required of police officers in Scotland.

- What do you think are the important skills, attitudes and knowledge required?
- Are these likely to change?
- Are there any unique factors in policing areas within Scotland?
- Do rural and urban areas present different demands on forces?

2. Recruitment and selection

Could we now focus on the recruitment and selection process within your particular force?

- Would you describe that process to me?
- How do you think the process is viewed by officers in your force?
- Do you think the process is fair? Equitable?
- Are there any issues that we should be aware of?

3. Standard Entrance Test

As you know SCRE has been commissioned to evaluate the operation of the Standard Entrance Test (SET) for entry to the police forces in Scotland, could we now explore your views on the test?

- Do you have direct experience of the test? In what capacity?
- What are your experiences? Have you identified any issues concerning the test and its administration?
- Do you think the current SET reflects the competences required of a modern police officer? If not, where are the gaps?
- How satisfied is your force with the SET? and Why?
- How cost-effective are the current SET arrangements?
- Are there ways in which the test might be improved? What would be your preferred option for the future?

4. Recruitment Path

I would like to show you an outline of the recruitment process for the police force and wonder whether you would chart your own force's procedures on it?

Steps in becoming a police officer

Pre-application criteria available in the public domain
(National) Standard Entrance Test
Other local screening tests/assessment centre
Interviews
Health checks
Job offers
National training centre (Scottish Police College)
Further tests/local training
Probationary period
Police Constable

5. Equal opportunities

Equal opportunities are now part of an employer's responsibilities and a recent HMIC report dealt with this issue. I wonder whether we could look at equal opportunities within the context of recruitment to the police?

- How does the force monitor equal opportunities? Any problems with it?

6. Training

Perhaps, we could now move on to explore the area of training?

- Would you describe the training which your force provides for new recruits?
- How does this meet the demands of the service?
- Do some groups have particular problems? How do you deal with these? Mentoring, tutor constables, counselling, other support?

7. Additional information

Thank you very much for discussing your force's procedures. Before we close, are there any additional issues which we have not covered but which you think I should be aware of?

Appendix 2: Instructions for SET assessors

The SET consists of 4 Sections: listening comprehension; data interpretation; calculation and number work; reading comprehension. The first Section is an aural test; the remaining 3 Sections are paper and pencil exercises in an answer booklet. Half an hour is allocated to the first Section and candidates are advised to spend no more than half an hour on each of the remaining Sections. As a member of an assessment panel, your task is to 'scrutinise' the three versions of the SET paying particular attention to:

- **presentation and reprographic qualities of the SET**
- **readability including levels of difficulty**
- **use of language**
- **evidence of gender and ethnic stereotyping**
- **other discriminatory or unfair test items.**

Appendix 3: Flesch reading ease index

Flesch score †	Reading ease	School year completed ‡
90-100	Very easy	4
80-89	Easy	5
70-79	Fairly easy	6
60-69	Standard	7-8
50-59	Fairly difficult	Some secondary school
30-49	Difficult	Secondary and some higher education
0-29	Very difficult.	Higher education

Notes

† Note the reverse order, *viz.* the smaller numbers being the most difficult.

‡ School years based upon an American model, *viz* 1-6: primary years; 7-9: junior high school; 10-12: high school.

Appendix 4: Analysis of topics in SET

Form 1	Form 2	Form 3
Listening comprehension		
• Arming the police	• Legalisation of marijuana	• Capital punishment
• Frozen embryo Research	• Famine relief in Ethiopia	• March for jobs
• Story of couple quarrelling and woman running away (female voice 1)	• Story of man disappearing (female voice 1)	• Murder suspect (female voice 2)
Data interpretation		
• Vacancies for young unemployed people	• Manchester housing vandalism	• Traffic cases involving drink & drugs
• Male/female guilty as percentage of population	• Regular drinkers by sex and social class	• Prison inmate population
Reading comprehension		
Sentence completion:		
• Technological development in society	• Reducing crime	• Milieu Therapy for aggressive children
1st passage:		
• Morality and vandals	• Management of young offenders	• Drinking attitude
2nd passage:		
• Courts and battered women	• Understanding mental illness	• Notes on criminal procedure
3rd passage:		
• Prisons and sentences	• Classes of prisoners	• Problems of non-custodial penalties
Notes		
• Oral instructions in male voice (West of Scotland accent)	• Oral instructions in male voice (West of Scotland accent)	• Oral instructions in male voice (West of Scotland accent) • This tape was the only one with a 5 minute timed interval at the end of the Listening Comprehension section

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The Scottish Council for Research in Education - Police Standard Entrance Test - Proforma Score Sheet

Candidate identifier	SET form set	Previous sitting of test	Listening comprehension	Data interpretation	Calculation and number work	Reading comprehension	Gender of candidate	Ethnicity (tick relevant box)								Educational achievement (tick relevant box)					Date of birth	Date of test	Appointed
	1/2/3	Y/N/O	Score	Score	Score	Score	F/M	White	Pakistani	Chinese	Indian	Black	Bangladeshi	Other	Unknown	Degree	Other acad. qual.	3+ 'H'/'A' level passes	1–2 'H'/'A' level passes	Other qual.	dd / mm / yy	dd / mm / yy	Y/N/ O/A
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	(j)	(k)	(l)	(m)	(n)	(o)	(p)	(q)	(r)	(s)	(t)	(u)	(v)	(w)	(x)

Survey data collection sheet

Appendix 5:

6/7/95, FG

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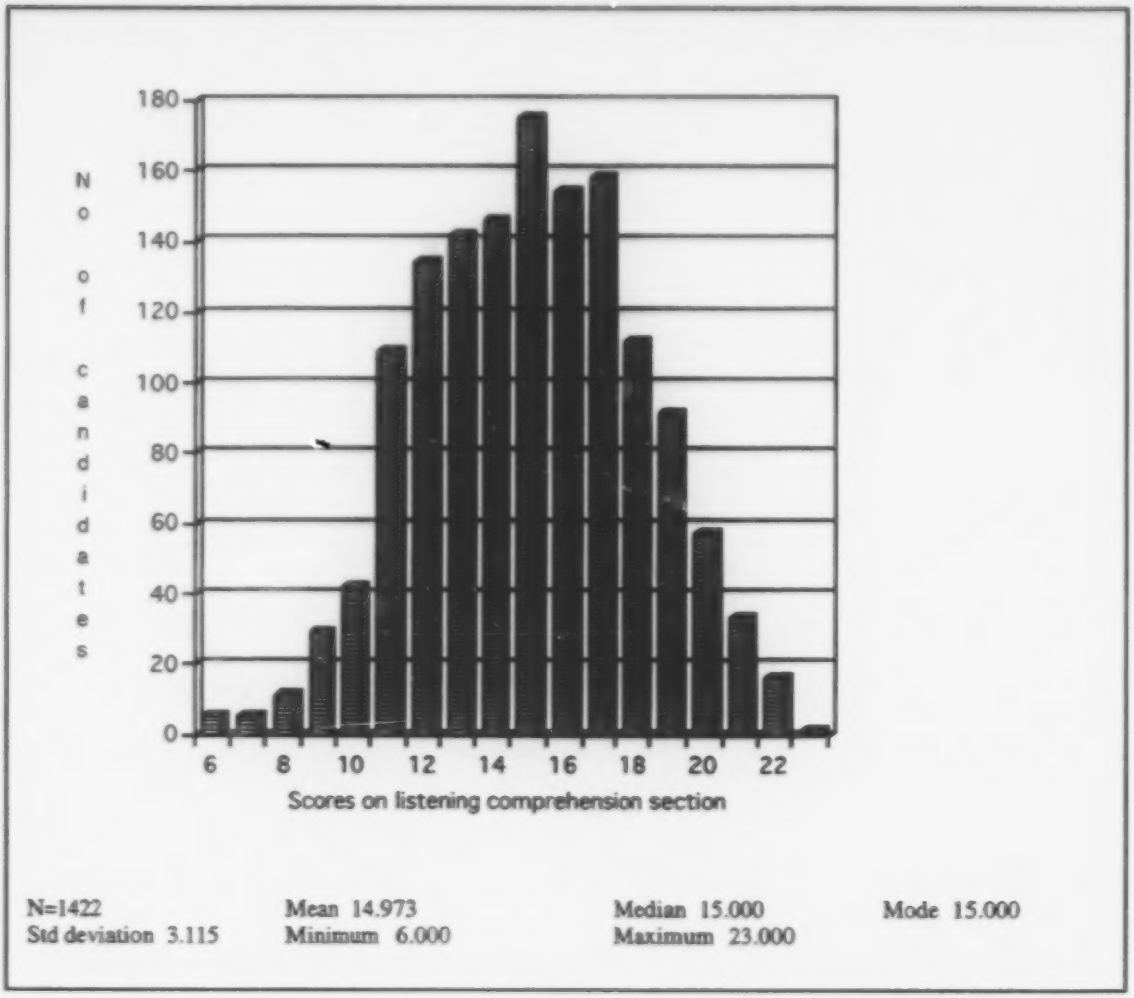
(\:: Police SET Proj:Survey Draft)

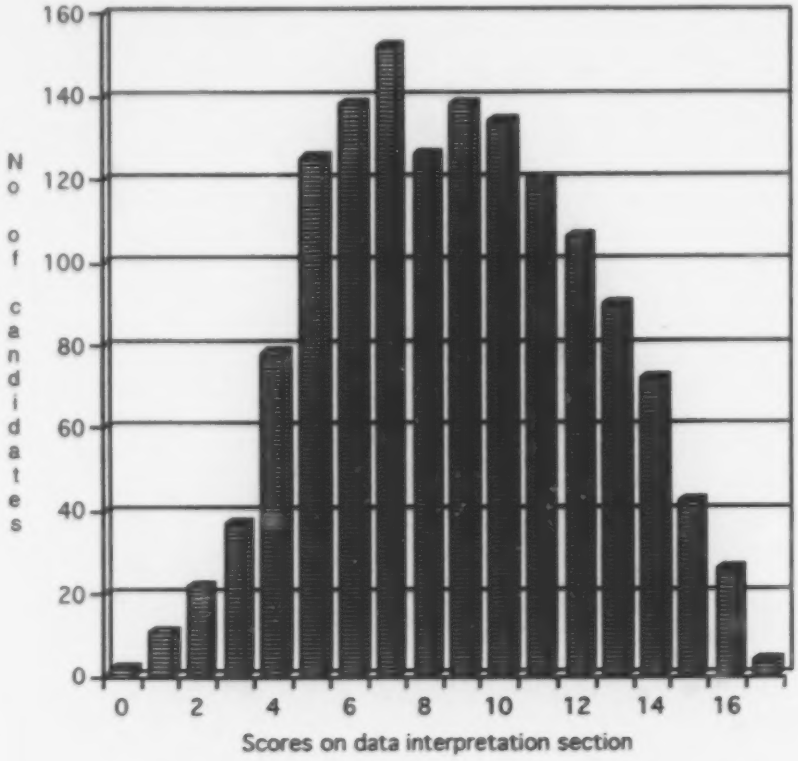
Appendix 6: Test scores on the four sections of the SET

Figure A: Distribution of scores on listening comprehension section



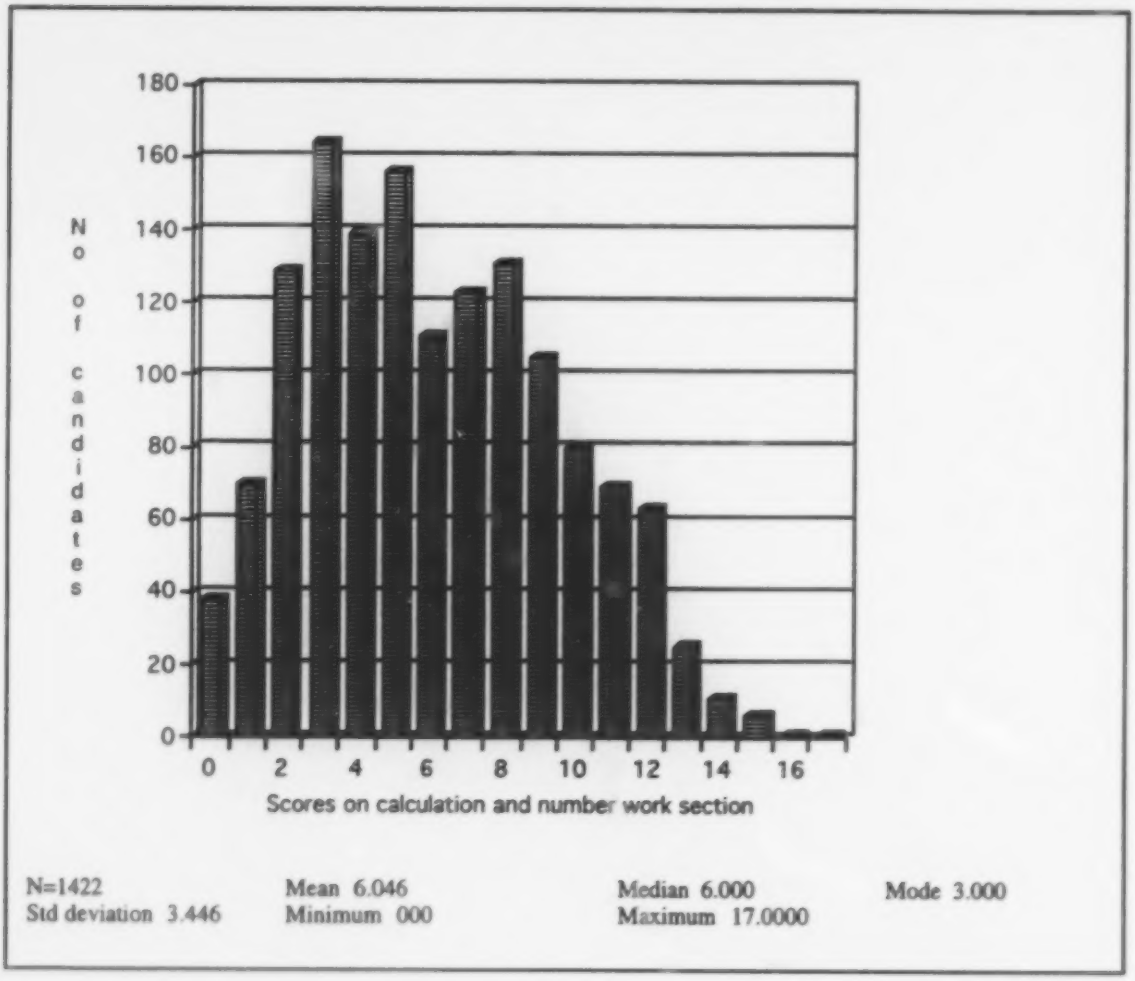
N=1422	Mean 14.973	Median 15.000	Mode 15.000
Std deviation 3.115	Minimum 6.000	Maximum 23.000	

Figure B: Distribution of scores on data interpretation section



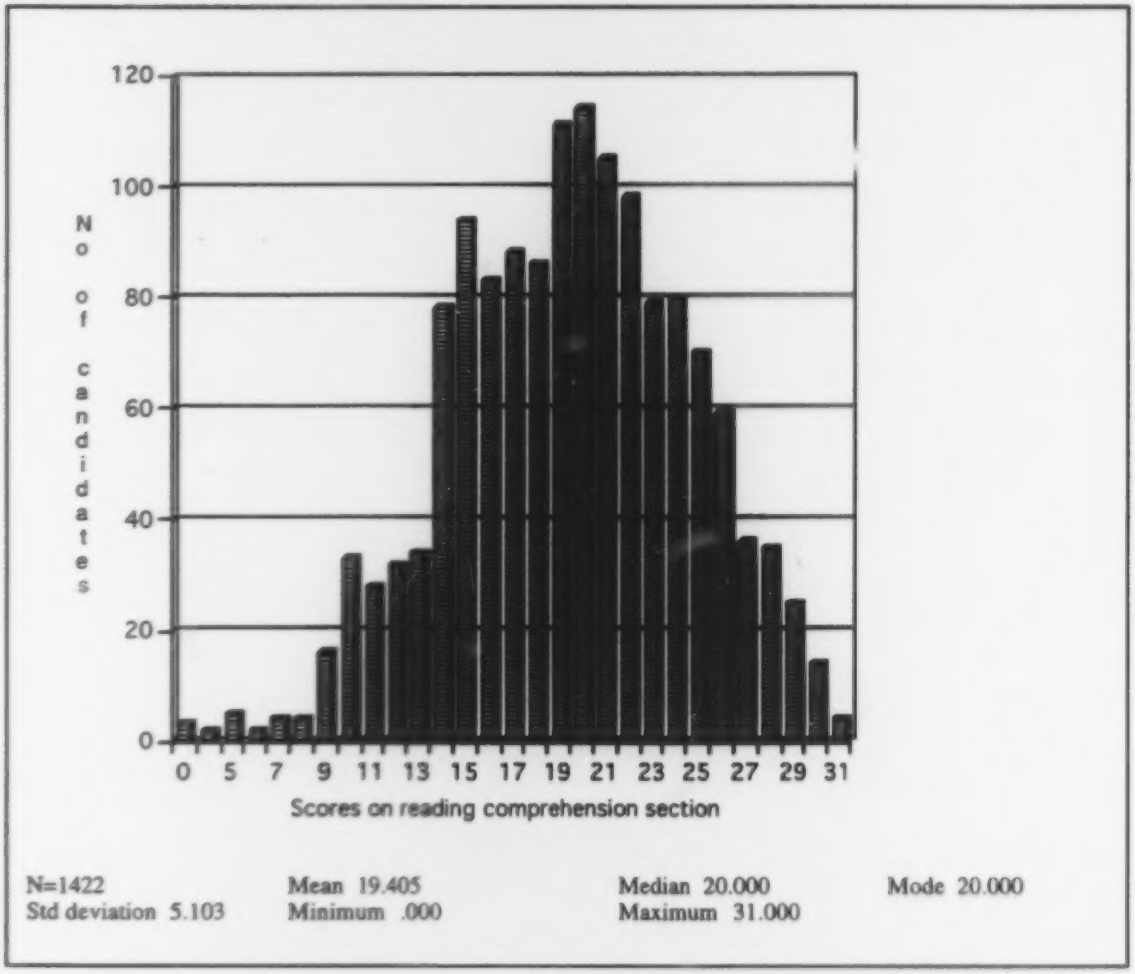
N=1422	Mean 8.766	Median 9.000	Mode 7.000
Std deviation 3.451	Minimum .000	Maximum 17.000	

Figure C: Distribution of scores on calculation & number work section



N=1422	Mean 6.046	Median 6.000	Mode 3.000
Std deviation 3.446	Minimum 000	Maximum 17.0000	

Figure D: Distribution of scores on reading comprehension section



Appendix 7: Sample of recruitment paths

Force A	Force B	Force C	Force D
Information • Available through careers fairs at schools, colleges, universities and regional careers offices • Work experience course is offered to secondary school pupils	**Information** • Available mainly through word of mouth, e.g. serving police officers	**Information** • Careers staff attend job fairs at schools, colleges, universities as well as those organised by the employment services • Literature is sent to regional careers advisers, libraries etc. • When necessary adverts are placed in national press, local radio and in job centres • Recruitment posters and leaflets are displayed in police stations	**Information** • Available through word of mouth, talking to local police officers. • Recently advertised in a number of papers due to the need for a higher than usual number of appointments
Public write for application forms • Candidates are sent application form and are informed of the basic entry requirements. Time scales vary dependent on vacancies • A does not require first aid or driving licence	**Public write for application forms** • Candidates are sent application form and are informed of the basic entry requirements. Time scales vary dependent on vacancies • B does/not require first aid or driving licence?	**Public write for application forms** • Candidates are sent application form and are informed of the basic entry requirements. Time scales vary dependent on vacancies • A visual acuity report required of those who wear glasses/lenses • Applicants required to hold driving licence since 1.4.95	**Public write and express an interest** • Normally, candidates write and ask if force is currently recruiting. Recent adverts have resulted in a flood of applications, with up to 80 per day • Asked to submit a letter of application with a CV • Candidates informed about Basic Entry Requirements • Application form not sent out at this stage, see below
Public return application forms	**Public return application forms** • On average 1/3 of forms not returned (1-26 weeks)	**Public return application forms** • No 'closing date' applies	**Public return letters of application** • No 'closing date' applies

Force A	Force B	Force C	Force D
Screening of applications • According to basic entry requirements	**Screening of applications** • According to basic entry requirements • Employers reference is not sought (1 week)	**Screening of applications** • According to basic entry requirements (Note: age requirement *de facto* early twenties: school leavers will nearly always be advised to apply again)	**Screening of applications** • CV is the basis of screening and is also used in subsequent interviews • Each application taken on its own merits • Every applicant fulfilling basic entry requirements go forward to sit the SET
Invitation to sit the SET • In accordance with projected vacancies at various times throughout the year	**Invitation to sit the SET** • In accordance with projected vacancies at various times throughout the year. (2-6 weeks)	**Candidates are invited to sit the SET** • Candidates are also informed about the structure of the recruiting process, fitness requirements and the need to research both the force and the role of constable (usually within 6-8 weeks of receiving application)	**Recruitment Day** • One day duration. Candidates are informed about the police and the SET (2-3 weeks from initial enquiry)
Candidates sit the SET	**Candidates sit the SET**	**Candidates sit the SET**	**Candidates sit the SET** • If pass, an application form is issued (2-3 weeks from Recruitment Day)
Vetting • To include checks of all police and criminal records for candidate, immediate family, associates and other relevant named persons	**Informal visit** • Visit to home of candidate is sometimes carried out, usually by experienced constable	**Initial interview** • Half an hour interview with a member of careers staff to check the validity of the application form, ascertain the candidate's reasons for applying and to assess his/her suitability (Approx. 4 weeks after SET)	**Assessment Day One** Includes: • Observation test • Fitness test • Psychometric test (5-6 weeks after SET)

Force A	Force B	Force C	Force D
Medical examination • Carried out by force police surgeon • Fitness testing is carried out during assessment day	[Medical examination and fitness testing carried out on selection day, see below]	**Background Report** • Unannounced visit to candidate's home by local sergeant or inspector (guidance notes enclosed); details of domestic circumstances and associates' character may come to light; referees and former employers contacted (with candidates permission) • Background report currently under review and is being standardised throughout Scotland • (usually 4-8 weeks after initial interview)	**Home interview** • Depending on number of applicants, holidays, etc. an informal and unannounced interview at home of candidate (carried out by sergeant) just before or after assessment day one
Assessment Day Extended testing takes place over one day and includes: • Essay; • Group discussion; • Public speaking; • Dictation of statement; • Observation test (using video of road accident); • Interpretation of legislation exercise; • Fitness testing which includes timed 1.5 mile run and gym exercises; a 'satisfactory' grade is required of all candidates	**Selection Day** Includes : • Medical examination • Fitness testing • Written autobiography • Televised presentation of autobiography • Selection panel interview by 3 senior officers and one tutor constable	Assessment day not used in C	**Background report** Includes checking of: • Local conviction records; • Special branch & 'intelligence clerk'; • Criminal intelligence; • DVLC check; • Questionnaire sent to stated referees (3-6 weeks after SET round about assessment day one)

Force A	Force B	Force C	Force D
Background report • Also includes 2 character references, DVLC enquiries, and armed forces check when appropriate • Informal and unannounced interview, usually by sergeant, at home of candidate; this takes place only after successful completion of assessment day (see above)	Employers reference is not sought.	**Panel Interview** • Conducted by 3 senior officers, i.e. one from careers department and 2 divisional representatives • (Up to 8-12 months after Background Report)	**Assessment Day Two** One day of: • Group discussion; • Problem solving exercise; • Letter/memo exercise; • Structured interview with 3 assessors; (2-4 weeks after Ass. Day One)
Selection panel interview • Panel consists of Force Training Officer and 2 other senior members of staff. Format currently under review	**Final interview** • Conducted by senior management, e.g. dep. or Assistant Chief Constable	**Medical examination** Fitness Test is currently suspended (within a few days of Panel Interview)	**Medical examination** • Full medical carried out by medical officer, incl. ergometer (cycle) (2-4 weeks after Assessment Day Two
Recommendation for appointment	**Recommendation for appointment**	**Recommendation for appointment** Candidate approved for appointment by head of careers department. (8 weeks prior to appointment)	**Senior Officers' Interview** • Conducted by 2 senior officers (superintendent or above) • Employer's reference not sought as employer may give a biased view of candidate who wants to leave their employ

Force A	Force B	Force C	Force D
Final interview • Conducted by Deputy Chief Constable	**Offer of appointment**	**Offer of appointment** (6 weeks prior to appointment)	**Recommendation for appointment**
Offer of appointment	**Appointment** • Officers are appointed as vacancies arise	**Appointment** (From initial application to appointment takes currently about 12-24 months)	**Offer of appointment**
Appointment • Officers are appointed as vacancies arise			**Appointment**
Note: • Psychometric testing not used. • Employer's reference is not normally sought; only when mentioned as character referee by candidate	**Note:** • Psychometric testing may not be used • Employer's reference is not normally sought; only when mentioned as character referee by candidate	**Note:** • Force employs an access to police course in conjunction with local college with the collaboration of the Community Relations Council	**Note:** • The CV is scrutinised for basic entry requirements; then candidates are invited to sit the SET; if pass, an application form is issued • Employer's reference is not normally sought; only when mentioned as character referee by candidate

Appendix 8: Basic entry requirements

Basic requirements for entry to the police forces in Scotland include:

- British citizenship (or equivalent)
- Good eyesight (Scottish standard).
- Physically fitness
- Aged over 18.5 and under 40 years of age on appointment
- A good standard of education
- Be of good character

Appendix 9: Sample interview aid form

1. Why do you want to be a police officer?

2. What do you see yourself doing as a police officer?

3. What personal qualities do you think a police officer should possess?

4. Describe briefly a recent interesting happening or event in your life.

5. How do you and your family occupy your spare time?

Note: Candidates were asked to complete this form immediately after sitting the SET in at least one force.

Appendix 10: Behavioural event interview schedule

1. Introduction

My name is … and I work for the Scottish Council for Research in Education.

We have been commissioned by the Scottish Office to study entrance to the police forces in Scotland. As part of that study, it would be very helpful if we had a better understanding of what police officers actually do so that we can match this to the selection procedures.

I am particularly interested in your experiences as a serving police officer and wonder whether during this interview we might focus on your own experiences.

This interview should take approximately 1½ hours. It is not the kind of interview which you yourself will be familiar with. It would help if we could record the interview. I will use the transcripts to supplement my own notes but I can assure you that you will not be identified in the report, nor will anything you say be revealed to anyone else in this force.

2. Icebreaker

To start, can we begin by talking about your current job?

- What is your job?
- What are your responsibilities?
- What do you do?
- Whom do you report to and who reports to you?

3. First Behavioural Event

Explain what we are looking for *viz.* an actual event which demonstrates what you have done as a police officer and that you think you **handled well.**
If pressed for an example say it could involve a colleague, a member of the public, other professionals or regional officials, something that they themselves were involved in.

(give the interviewee time to recall an event, ask them to visualise it and describe what happened)

Prompts
(examples use as appropriate- concentrate on actual behaviour and discourse)

- Where did this happen?
- Who was involved?
- What did you do?
- What did they do?
- What did you say?
- How did they respond?
- How long did this take?
- Were members of other professions involved?
- What was the gender, social class or ethnic background of those involved?

4. Second Behavioural Event

That was very helpful, it gives me a better idea of what police officers do. I wonder now whether you can identify a second event but this time focus on one which you think that you handled **less well?**

(give the interviewee time to recall a second event, ask them to visualise it and describe exactly what happened)

Prompts

(examples use as appropriate- concentrate on actual behaviour and discourse)

- Where did this happen?
- Who was involved?
- What did you do?
- What did they do?
- What did you say?
- How did they respond?
- How long did this take?
- Were members of other professions involved?
- What was the gender, social class or ethnic background of those involved?

5. Reflection Stage

First Event

Can we now look at the first event which you have just described to me, looking back why do you think that event went well?

Prompts

- What was your part in it?
- What do you think you did particularly well?
- What did you learn from the event?
- Has this affected the way you have behaved in other events?

Second event

Can we now turn to the second event, remember this is the one which you felt went less well. Looking back now, why do you think it went less well?

Prompts

- What was your part in it?
- What do you think you did particularly well?
- What did you learn from the event?
- Has this affected the way you have behaved in other events?

6. Characteristics to do the job

Finally, I wonder whether we can look at the characteristics which you think a person needs to do your job well? What would you say these are?

7. Ending

Thank You

Reassure - stress confidential, no names will be used, and quotes will be kept anonymous

Next step - e.g.: explain that we intend to hold focus groups to look at preliminary findings from these sessions

Appendix 11: Functional map for police constables

The tables below represent a functional map for Scottish Police Constables. Given the limitations on time and resources, we do not consider the map exhaustive or comprehensive; nor does it represent specialist areas, such as Criminal Investigation or Traffic Departments.

The map was generated from both the behavioural events which officers described to us, and the focus group meetings. These attributes/attitudes are presented below in alphabetical order.

The constructs marked with an asterisk (*) were mentioned only by promoted officers.

ATTITUDES/ATTRIBUTES CLAIMED BY OFFICERS

Self	
Be	*Show*
Assertive	Be assertive or solid - with seniors, peers, other agencies, public; Stand own ground; Manipulate the situation, e.g. "flirt with them a little bit to get your way"
Committed	Have commitment; Persevere in detecting crime; See things through
Confident	Have the confidence in own assessment of situation and knowledge of power relations in system; Have confidence in self
Controlled	Control anger/ emotions; Show no emotion; Dealing with frustration; Manage disappointment
Creative	Be able to use imagination and creativity (*); Be able to act quickly
Defensive	Preserve self image; Conceal own shortcomings; Improve self image by putting others down; Protect own identity; Keep family in darkness about job
Impartial	Develop impartial role image; Stay objective or neutral; Be able to speak to people without showing prejudice;
Independent	Be able to act unsupervised in pursuing an investigation; Work without supervision; Taking responsibility unsupervised
Proactive	Forward approach, proactive, take initiative
Relaxed	Be able to switch off; Be able to walk away from situation and get on with other work; Avoid taking on other people's problems; Avoid letting people's circumstances affect you; Have a sense of humour
Resilient	Able to cope with stress; Cope with counter accusations; Cope with long (and irregular) hours; Cope with pressure from peers; Be able to take criticism; Cope with a highly charged business; Dealing with uncertainty; Face danger; Confront armed people

Sincere	Be sensitive to whom you're dealing with and develop appropriate method for getting positive response from folk; Be sincere
Towards Others	
Be	*Show*
Approachable	Build up others' confidence in you; Be approachable
Compassionate	Show compassion; Show consideration for victim and their family; Sympathise; Understand others' points of view
Professional	Be part of multi-disciplinary approach; Take reprimand / criticism; Frustration with lack of appreciation of human nature in other professionals (especially social workers); Tutoring, incl. show how approach, bring out personality, write monthly progress reports, comment on work and how probationer copes, point out weak areas, honing observation skills, give praise, take initiative; Pass assessment centre *
Tactful	Be polite, be tactful; Preserve confidentiality, be discrete, tactful and sympathetic; Use tact, deal with colleagues tactfully; Be tactful with colleagues and say the 'right' thing
Team minded	Be able to work as a team member; Play a [specific] role; Be a facilitator.

TASKS/ACTIVITIES OFFICERS SAY THEY DO

Communicate	
Advise	Take a welfare role; Advise people; Advise public on security; Explain procedures; Warning people of possible outcomes
Collect information	Conduct enquiry; Enquire vigorously; Research, i.e. delve into background of a case; Check facts; Collect evidence; Gather evidence; Trace family; Find people, their address; Collect background information; Wheedle out information; Elicit further information; Investigate complaints; Secure productions
Communicate with people	Answering phone calls; Talk to a wide range of people; Communicate at the right level; Establish rapport; Deal with children; Speak to children who may have been abused; Speak to parent; Reassure mother; Send faxes and other communications; Decide how much information to release
Establish rapport	Read non-verbal communication, understand people's intentions; Listen to what people say;
Give orders	Give orders to public and colleagues: Delegate work *
Initiate communication	Establish links of communication, e.g. radio frequencies; Make contacts with people; Make phone calls; Bring in experts *
Interview	Interview on sensitive topic (often with social worker); Interview victims; Interview suspect (with CID); Sit in on CID interviews; Interview witnesses; Interviewing people; Carry out interviews; Take details from complainant
Liaise with colleagues	Briefing superior officer and support staff; Confer with and update colleagues; Liaise with negotiation co-ordinator and firearms experts *; Inform other officers of cultural differences; Working in a mixed sex environment; Take part in banter; Liaise with other force; Refer to superior officer; Tutoring; Request support unit Refuse requests and suggestions and pressure from above: saying no
Liaise with other professionals	Liaise with other agencies; Liaise with SWD; Liaise with Procurators; Involving SWD - using own judgement; Liaising with housing department; Liaise with other professionals (pass problem on to SWD); Inform SWD; Work closely with social worker; Work with numerous subgroups; Visit schools; Phone school, teacher, doctor, nurse, other police officers; Persuade other agencies to act, i.e. be proactive; Speak assertively to other agency; Request fire brigade and ambulance; Speak to media Avoid involving SWD; Avoid involving media
Negotiate	Mediate between adversaries; Give suspects enticements and incentives/inducements; explain about inevitability, what must or is likely to happen; Give people ultimatums; Tell the truth; Be straight with other people; Explain procedures; Play for time; String things along - use time to your benefit
Report	Report to court; Reporting to procurator; Stand in witness box in court; Submit (racial) incident form; Write report to fiscal
Seek co-operation	Gain people's confidence; Gain the public's trust; Gain confidence of local people; Gain trust by explaining in simple terms what is happening or can happen; Gaining trust to secure evidence, *e.g.* getting co-operation of travellers to get a conviction; Develop trusting relationship with contacts to gain full information; Present yourself positively in an interview situation with informants

Information handling	
Facilitate flow of information	Arrange and attend meetings; Attend case conferences; Attend courts; Be present during clinical examination
Keep track	Keep track of events; Keeping records; Look after productions; Receive and distribute mail *
Obtain information	Receive and gather intelligence when doing the beat; Receive reports from public; Take witness statements; Take notes; Do paperwork; Observe
Policing	
Apprehend and arrest people	Apprehend and arrest people (use discretion); Apprehend armed and/or violent persons; Being responsible for prisoner custody and welfare; Escort prisoners
Control situation	Calm a situation down; Keep it calm; Stay in control of situation Avoid inflaming situation, avoid provocation
Request support	Bring in support; Request fire brigade and ambulance; Bring in specialist unit, negotiation team *
Deal with people in difficult situations	Harassment; Abuse cases; Racial incidents; Deal with people who have AIDS; Avoid alarming people unnecessarily
Driving	Driving
Make situation secure	Ensure safety of others and self, watch self and probationer; watch prisoner; watch traffic
Gain access	Gain access; Gain permission to interview a child on sensitive topic
Receive prisoners	Receive prisoners; Be responsible for prisoner welfare
Use force	Use force; Break up fight; Apprehend people; Use discretion
Give orders	Give people orders; Prevent some officers acting hastily

AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE AND 'COGNITIVE SKILLS'

Planning	
Read a situation	Assess situation; Evaluate evidence; Keep many strands in mind at one time; Establish an overview of: available resources, the exact situation, identities, and communication available *; Put a picture together; Assessing and asserting the seriousness of case; Make a snap decision
Keep sight of details	Attention to details in each case
Plan	Strategic planning * : Move people around; Maintain balance of experience; Set goals; Arrange annual leave; Make contingencies; Allocate resource; Manage absenteeism *
Prioritise	Plan investigation; Prioritise work; Decide on (appropriate) action; Decide on approach
Decision making	
Make reasoned judgement	Make judgement based on own experience and circumstances at the time; Pass moral judgement
Make decision	Decide on action; Weigh up routes of action, e.g. consider replacement officers, consider ordinary policing requirements versus specialist needs, staffing problems, costs, etc.; Make compromises between what is possible, effective and desirable *
Discern what is important	Screening information, e.g. in answering phone calls
Awareness	
Be alert to possibilities	Be alert to what is happening and what can happen; Know when to get corroboration
Be alert to limitations	Be aware of constraints (e.g. time); Be aware of the need to act with discretion in politically sensitive areas
Balance demands	Know or learn how to deal with conflicting demands; Keep many strands in mind at one time; Consider alternatives; Test hypotheses
Piece together and evaluate the strength of evidence	Build up evidence to make a case; Collect and evaluate evidence; Putting information together / make sense of collected information; Ensure that lines of enquiry are exhausted; Decide who attends interviews; Interviewing into background of case - understand the sequence; Exclude suspects from investigation

People skills	
Understand people	Judge people's character; Learning about people; Know how people might react; Knowledge of child development; Understand people, their problems and needs e.g. young offenders;
Understand environment	Be aware of developments in beat area and its cultures; Have local knowledge
Understand self	Learn about yourself
Understand moment	Say the right thing, at the right time in the right way; Say the 'right' thing (so as not to turn an interviewee off); Possess interview skills
Understand communication	Understand non-verbal communication (tell by tone of voice); Take on board what people say; Get down to the child's level
Understand society	Understand traditions and customs; Understand different cultural contexts; Learn a [foreign/ethnic minority] language; Know about different religions; Deal with symptoms (police can't change underlying causes)
Law & procedures	
Know procedures	Procedures - Be aware of procedures to pass case to other tier within police or other agency; Do things the 'proper' way to avoid complications, *e.g.* erection of mental/emotional barriers, avoid racist complaint, etc.; Follow orders and procedures; Override orders; Decide when not to follow procedures
Know legal process	Understand legal process; Understand law; Understand the law and legal procedures; Keep up to date with and apply new regulations
Ensure quality	Deal with complaints against police; Avoid complaints

Appendix 12: Qualitative data collected

	Rank	Sex	Years of service
Behavioural Event Interviews			
	PC	F	5-10
	PC	F	5-10
	PC	F	5-10
	Chief Inspector	M	>20
	Chief Inspector	M	>20
	Inspector	M	
	PC	M	15-20
	PC	M	15 20
	PC	M	5-10
	PC	M	<5
	PC	M	15-20
	PC	M	<5
	PC	M	5-10
	PC	M	5-10
	PC	M	>20
	PC	M	>20
	PC	M	
	PC	M	5-10
	Superintendent	M	>20
Focus Groups			
1	1 Inspector, 3 Sergeants	1 F, 3 M	
2	6 PCs	3 F, 3 M	
3	1 Inspector, 3 Sergeants	1 F, 3 M	
4	6 PCs	2 F, 4 M	

Appendix 13: Focus group topic guide

Introduction

We are [names of moderator and scribe] and we work for the Scottish Council for Research in Education.

We have been commissioned by the Scottish Office to study the entrance to the police service in Scotland. As part of that study, it would be very helpful if we had a better understanding of what police officers actually do so that we can match this to the recruitment procedures.

We are particularly interested in your experiences as serving police officers and would like to discuss with you some of the themes which emerged from individual interviews which we conducted earlier. It should take approximately 1½ hours. We will use the tape recordings to supplement our own notes and we can assure you that what you say will not be revealed to anyone else in this force.

The purpose of this meeting is to let you talk as much and as freely as possible about your own experiences. Let us start by introducing ourselves:

1. **Coping with differences**

   In our earlier interviews a number of officers mentioned that they are often in situations where they had to deal with people who were quite unlike themselves.

   - Does this apply to you?
   - Can you give us some examples?
   - Is this problematic?
   - What about working with other professionals?

   - *e.g., Procurator fiscal; Social worker; Reporter*

2. **Communication**

   Officers talked about the importance of being able to communicate with people in a way that they would understand.

   - Is this something you do?
   - Can you identify particular examples of where good communications were essential?
   - What about the particular use of language - whose language do you use?
   - What effect does this have on situations?

3. Uncertainty/ambiguity

Often our respondents found themselves in situations where they had to survey a situation very quickly and make up their minds as to the appropriate action. They described exercising a degree of judgement about the situation and the people in it.

- Is this something you can relate to?

It might help to look at some examples where you haven't been sure about what to do next.

- Can you give us some examples?
- How did you resolve this issue?

The officers in the earlier interviews expressed some uncertainty in relation to the degree to which they can do policing by the book. Officers told us that they sometimes have to decide whether to act or whether to hold back, that is, they have exercised their discretion.

- How do you define discretion?
- Can you give some examples of where you have exercised it?
- How have you coped with this in the past.

- *e.g. , may deliberately ignore minor offences in order to gain or maintain the trust of the public*

4. Frustration/stress

Most jobs have stressful aspects.

- What are the particular stresses of being a police officer?
- *Dealing with: colleagues? clients? members of the public? other professionals?*
- How do you deal with stress?

5. Courage

Can we now look at one requirement which other officers have identified, i.e. courage.

- What do you understand by courage?
- Is courage a requirement?
- How do you deal with danger in the job?

6. Qualities

And finally, if we asked you, what makes a good police officer, what would you say?

THANK YOU – Next step: Inform about Delphi (consultation) survey

Appendix 14: Recruitment hurdles in one force

This appendix shows the proportion of candidates failing at various hurdles in the recruitment pathway of one force over a three year period (1992-1994). The hurdles are not necessarily in chronological order.

Hurdles		**Males**		**Females**	
	N=	total %	ethnic %	total %	ethnic %
Applicants in period	*17,513*	77.2	0.9	22.8	0.3
Failed: SET	*2,145*	55.0	3.0	44.5	0.8
Failed: Initial interview	*1,823*	77.7	0.4	22.3	0.1
Failed: Background enquiry	*126*	81.0	0.8	19.0	0.0
Failed: Final interview panel	*284*	76.8	0.7	23.2	0.0
Failed: Medical or fitness test	*88*	76.1	0.0	23.9	0.0
Failed: Visual acuity	*692*	67.2	1.0	32.8	0.9
Failed: Age range	*289*	66.1	1.4	33.9	0.7
Failed: Other reasons	*7,355*	84.0	0.6	16.0	0.1
Still in process	*2,540*	72.8	1.0	27.2	0.4
Total appointments	*922*	73.1	0.7	26.9	0.4

Notes:

- Percentages refer to horizontal rows, see text.
- 'Other reasons' include: Paper sift; criminality; criminal intelligence; lacked education/life/work experience; and excess debt.
- Total appointments include all applications to date and not just the number of applicants for the period sampled.

Appendix 15: SET scores for female and male candidates

This appendix shows the mean scores obtained by a sample of female (N=273) and male (N=880) candidates from all 8 Scottish forces over a three year period. The table shows mean total scores and mean scores for each of the four sections of the SET.

SET/section	Mean	
Total score		
Females	48.2	*
Males	50.0	
Listening Comprehension		
Females	15.3	
Males	15.1	
Data Interpretation		
Females	8.4	*
Males	9.0	
Calculation & number work		
Females	5.1	*
Males	6.4	
Reading comprehension		
Females	19.5	
Males	19.6	

* The difference is statistically significant

Appendix 16: Delphi questionnaire form

The Scottish Council for Research in Education

Police Standard Entrance Test (SET) - CONFIDENTIAL

Below is a list of questions and issues emerging from our research. At this stage these are tentative and confidential. Would you please indicate whether you agree or disagree and add any comments you wish to make.

Name
.....Rank.....Force.....

Questions	Agree	Dis-agree	Comments (including don't know)
1. In our two case study forces, the SET was perceived to perform one of a number of functions. Which of the following roles does the SET perform in your force?			
• Screening out candidates who do not have the necessary mental ability to carry out the basics of police work			
• Selecting the people who would benefit from police training			
• Reducing the number of applicants to manageable numbers			
• Other, please specify			
2. The recruitment process in the Scottish forces varies according to the number and sequencing of recruitment and selection activities. Do you think that:			
• the selection procedures should be identical in all eight forces?			
• all candidate should go through all stages in recruitment and selection?			
• some candidates should be granted exemptions from some stages of selection, *e.g.* on the basis of prior learning or relevant experiences?			
• some candidates whom forces may wish to recruit in greater numbers *e.g.* women or people from ethnic minorities, should be targeted by your force?			

Questions (Continued)	**Agree**	**Dis-agree**	**Comments** (including don't know)
3. Some forces utilised assessment centre type activities for recruitment and selection purposes			
• Do procedures in your force include an assessment centre?			
• Have you personal experience of assessment centres?			
• as a candidate or assessor? Please specify:			
• Do you think assessment centres should be used in your force?			
4. Police officers described to us a range of activities which they undertake. These would appear to suggest there is a: - relatively small number of specialised skills required of police officers, *e.g.* arrest, search, etc. - much larger number of skills and qualities which may be demonstrated by a number of professions, *e.g.* inter-personal and communication skills, decision-making, empathy			
• Do you agree with this analysis?			
• What, in your view, are the 3 most important qualities a police constable in your force should be able to demonstrate?	1. 2. 3.		
5. What changes, if any, would you like to see to:			
• the SET?			
• the recruitment process?			

Thank you for your co-operation.

Please return to Peter Glissov before 24 November 1995 at:

Scottish Council for Research in Education, 15 St. John Street, Edinburgh EH8 8JR

Appendix 17: Structure of probationer training programme: example from Case Study 1

Week	Course	Location	Duration
1	Induction	FTC	1 week
2 - 11	Basic	SPC	10 weeks
12 - 13	Post Basic	FTC	2 weeks
14 - 35	OPERATIONS	Division	22 weeks
36	First Year	FTC	1 week
37 - 58	OPERATIONS	Division	22 weeks
59	Pre-advanced	FTC	1 week
60 - 67	Advanced	SPC	8 weeks
68 - 83	OPERATIONS	Division	16 weeks
84	Second Year	FTC	1 week
85 - 103	OPERATIONS	Division	19 weeks
104	Confirmation Course	FTC	1 week

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